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THE Christian CENTURY

Thinking Critically, Living Faithfully

Deferred dreams

One young immigrant's life in the shadows

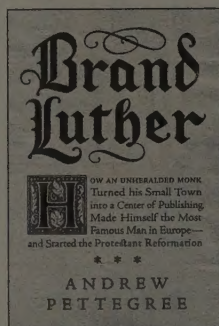
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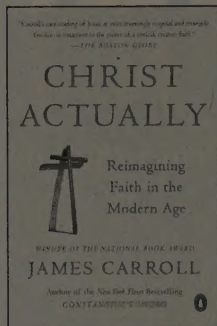
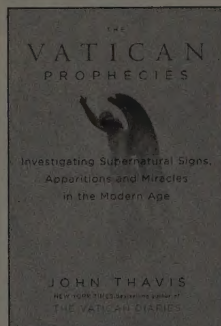
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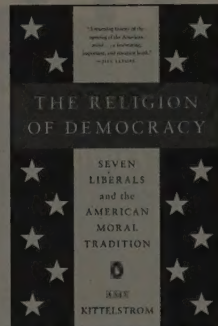
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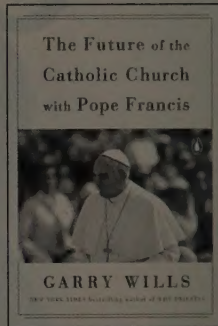
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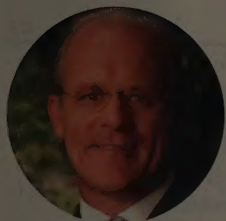


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From the publisher

Peter W. Marty

The secret of authority

When the British wit G. K. Chesterton was dining with a literary friend in London one day, their conversation turned to the subject of power and authority. At one point, Chesterton remarked, “If a rhinoceros were to enter this restaurant now, there is no denying he would have great power here. But I should be the first to rise and assure him that he had no authority whatsoever.”

Most of us encounter this relationship between power and authority early in life, even if it takes some time before we recognize all the dynamics at play. Fourth grade safety patrol was my first flirtation with raw power. Most of us selected for patrol duty developed bigger heads than we deserved, in part because the responsibility of protecting little children induced some awe in us. We believed we were the only saving reality between a child and a fast-moving car. With outstretched arms and an orange reflective belt buckled to our bodies, others might have confused any of us with a glow-in-the-dark Jesus minus the cross. I enjoyed the added benefit of knowing how to whistle through my teeth. With a quick shrill burst, I was able to command a dump truck to halt or stop a couple of seven-year-olds tussling at the curb.

Although I relished this whiff of power, I had no authority whatsoever. It took years of observing others before I learned that I had confused the authority of power with the power of authority. Like Richard Nixon after Watergate, who still had the full power of the

presidency at his disposal but zero authority, I couldn’t find a single kid who loved the commanding manner of my safety patrol antics. I had yet to grasp the magnificence of another president—Abraham Lincoln—who possessed great authority but who was often reticent to exercise the full powers of his office.

Social theorist Max Weber describes power as having a coercive element and authority as having a noncoercive one. You can do what I ask of you because you *have* to do what I have the power to make you do. Or you can do what I ask of you because you *want* to do it out of respect for who I am to you. The difference between the two motives is huge.

I have noticed among people I admire that those who sacrifice the most in the way of love also end up with the greatest authority. In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly exercises his own special power of authority through love. With no political clout, no military at his command, no particular social prestige, and no wealth to his name, he reserves the authority of power for special occasions. We do not see him positioning himself to make others do what he commands. Instead, other people have to want the life he proposes.

When Jesus removes an unclean spirit from a convulsing man inside a synagogue, his exorcising power is on full display. But that act of power prompts the gathered worshipers to be astonished by his authority. “What is this? A new teaching—with authority!” (Mark 1:28). What they saw in Jesus was more than raw power; they witnessed the power of love. And in that love is the secret of the Lord’s authority.

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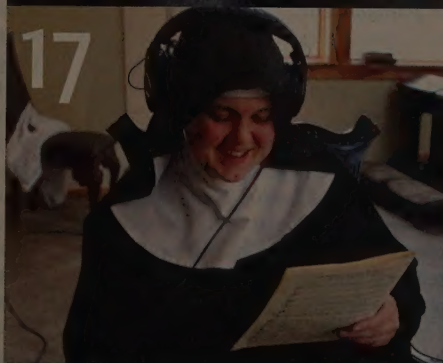
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Churches and creation

In his article "What's your passion?" (April 27), Anthony Robinson suggests that churches need to be passionate. How about a passion for saving creation? Some environmental issues may seem beyond our ability, but churches can assume a leadership role in habitat restoration.

Churches have space and can learn, demonstrate, and teach habitat restoration to their communities. If the church property isn't enough space, the surrounding neighborhoods might be. Churches can lead communities toward saving creation. Even churches without outdoor space can lead through education and collaboration with other churches.

Here is something churches can be passionate about, a product that people can be attracted to even if they are not otherwise attracted to churches.

Jim Ruyle

Portland, Ore.

The third Inkling . . .

I was delighted to read Philip Jenkins's review of *Charles Williams: The Third Inkling*, Grevel Lindop's biography (May 25). Williams's idea to "bear one another's burdens" (based on Gal. 6:2) led to many sermons, and his concept of substitutionary love became fundamental to my concept of how a Christian should love. I have always thought Williams to be more substantive theologically than Tolkien or Lewis. One quibble: I would hardly call *War in Heaven* "Williams's best-known novel"—surely that honor belongs to *Descent into Hell* or *All Hallows' Eve*.

Dave Pomeroy

Las Vegas, Nev.

Dangerous analogies . . .

In "Is Trump like Hitler?" (May 11), Björn Krondorfer says that commentators lose credibility when they take

Nazism and Hitler as their point of departure because "nothing can compare to what the Nazis did in Germany." If that's the case, then what's the point of the post-Holocaust rallying cry, "Never again!"?

While I agree that comparing George Bush or Barack Obama to Hitler is ridiculous, the fact remains that Trump is saying a lot of the same things that Hitler said. He's long on violent, supremacist, and exclusionary rhetoric and short on actual policy positions or detailed solutions, just as prewar Hitler was. Trump's followers are in much-diminished economic circumstances, just as the Germans were after World War I (the Germans were in much worse shape than Americans today are). Trump may not be a "race ideologist," but I wouldn't say the same about those who want to vote him into power. The mainstream in Europe never thought Hitler would get anywhere in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They were mistaken.

Making the comparison between the voting majority of our Republican Party and the prewar Nazi Party does not take away from the fact that there are other forms of demagoguery with which we must contend. I don't believe anyone thinks there's only one big evil personified in the world. But I believe that the phrase "Never again!" is still valid, and we must be ready to respond vigorously when the threat of fascism rears its ugly head.

Kate Maver

christiancentury.org comment

While Krondorfer is right to point out the limitations of reasoning by analogy, there is at least one powerful virtue in looking for analogies with earlier events that he doesn't consider. Looking back on events in which the social fabric has been seriously torn can suggest patterns leaders can use, either exploiting them to increase their power or taking steps to diffuse them for the good of the community.

One pattern that prevailed in Germany after World War I was the blaming of groups of people for the suffering Germans were experiencing. The blaming usually begins with those who are weakly integrated into the society, such as the Jews in Germany, but in the absence of good leadership it doesn't stop there. Hitler was elected by voters who agreed with such blaming or who didn't take it seriously enough.

The lesson is that we need to look for leaders who are well and broadly educated and whose proposed solutions to our problems do not rest on blame, whether directed toward the Chinese, immigrants, Muslims, or the one percent.

J. Brañsen

christiancentury.org comment

I too fear what I see as Hitler in Donald Trump's ideas and language but have been unable to articulate my misgivings as well as Krondorfer. I'm worried that Trump fails to ask anything of us, the American citizens, and I'm worried about the implication that all we have to do is elect him and he'll "make us great again."

Bill Pfeiffer

christiancentury.org comment

A congregation's wisdom . . .

What a wonderful and wise contribution James R. Nieman made in "What a congregation knows" (April 27). His article should be required reading for every seminarian headed to parish ministry and for any pastor accepting a new parish call. Paying attention to such practical wisdom could both enhance the development of healthy pastor-parish relationships and prevent some of the stumbles made by new pastors who ignore local wisdom.

Michael Anton

Hastings, Mich.

June 22, 2016

Executive power on trial

The immigration case that the Supreme Court will rule on this month is technically not about immigration. It is about the limits of executive power and the relations between Congress and the executive branch. If the administration prevails, however, it can expand a program that has already given hundreds of thousands of young immigrants—who have lived most of their lives in this country—the right to work, obtain a driver's license, go to school with in-state tuition, and other freedoms that add up to an almost normal existence (see the article on p. 20). If the administration loses, or if the Supreme Court splits 4-4, the future of these young people (and that of some of their parents) will be more fragile.

United States v. Texas will decide the fate of President Obama's Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and the expanded Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (known as DACA+). President Obama issued the original version of DACA in 2012 to allow certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country before age 16 to receive a renewable two-year work permit and temporary exemption from deportation. Critics complained then that he was reforming immigration policy by fiat. When Obama expanded the categories of DACA in 2014 to cover even more young immigrants and extend their work permits to three years, and issued DAPA to allow the undocumented parents of DACA recipients and children born in the United States to have temporary legal standing of their own, 26 states charged the administration with overstepping its authority.

Obama's executive actions would not have been taken if Congress had passed comprehensive immigration reform, so in that sense Obama is doing what should be done by Congress. But given the presence of 11 million undocumented immigrants, the administration has to have some scheme for prioritizing who is slated for deportation and how to use government resources. Even without an executive action, an administration could defer the deportation of young people who had been in the United States since childhood—that much lawyers for the objecting states have admitted. What plaintiffs are objecting to is not the right of the president to defer deportation, but that he has systematized the process so as to provide clear relief to some people.

Ultimately, even if DACA and DAPA are upheld, substantive reform has to come from Congress. DACA and DAPA provide only temporary relief, not a path to citizenship. In the absence of such reform, they are legitimate efforts to make family unity and young people's futures a priority in immigration policy.

Plaintiffs object to Obama's systematization of the deportation process.

CENTURY marks

TABLE TALK: Lunch at Cole Community Church in Boise, Idaho, is not an ordinary church potluck. The guest list is half Christian, half Muslim. The meat is lamb, cooked according to the Muslim halal style. The meal is a “peace feast,” started by Nick and Laura Armstrong, who had lived in predominantly Muslim countries for many years and were startled by the animosity toward Muslims they discovered upon their return to the United States. The purpose of the meals is for those gathered to talk about their faiths, not to argue about them. People ask each other questions like, “What do you believe God expects of you here on Earth? What do you wish people/the community understood about your faith?” (*Idaho Statesman*, April 1).

WELCOME TO ISLAMBERG:

American Bikers United Against Jihad spent months recruiting bikers for a ride through Islamberg, New York, an exclu-

sively Muslim town, in an attempt to call attention to what it considers a home-grown jihadist threat. Only five bikers showed up, but 400 people turned out for a counterdemonstration. Once the bikers had passed, the demonstrators were welcomed by Islamberg residents with food, speeches, and music. The majority of the citizens of Islamberg are African Americans (*Guardian*, May 16).

MAKING MUSIC TO THE END:

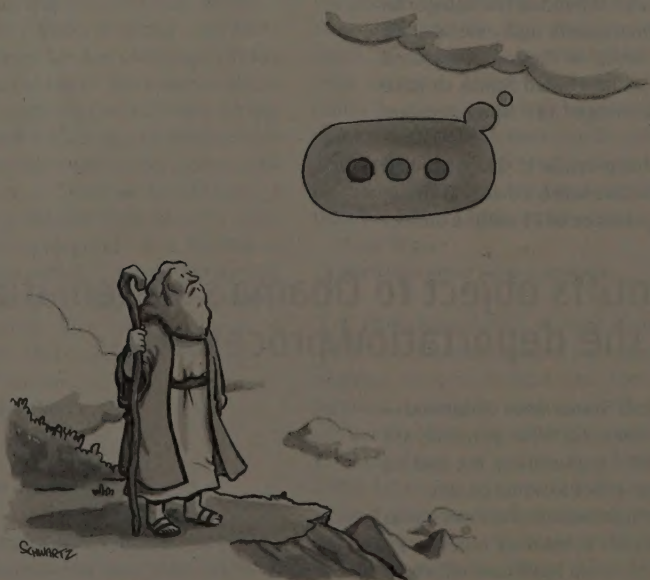
Jane Little died at age 87 doing what she had been doing for the past 71 years—playing bass with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. She joined the symphony at age 16 in 1945 and was known as the longest-tenured orchestra musician in the world. A frail and injury-prone woman, the bass was an unlikely instrument for her to play. She collapsed while the symphony was performing “There’s No Business Like Show Business” as the encore at a pops

concert. Members of the bass section carried her backstage; she never regained consciousness. “Hollywood could not have scripted it better,” said one viola player of her death (*Washington Post*, May 16).

BUSY, BUSY: Kim Armentrout, a United Methodist Church pastor in Ohio, began a yearlong time-logging project in January. The project has revealed that she’s not as busy as she claims and has more time for interacting with her husband and daughter than she thought. “I can stop feeling guilty” about neglecting family, Armentrout said. She thought that on weeks when she had a funeral there was little time for anything else. Her log shows that a funeral involves only five hours at a funeral home or seven if the funeral is held at the church. Holy week was stressful, having put in 58 hours of church work. But the exercise taught her that she told herself “false stories” about how busy she is. Armentrout, like other professionals, tend to think of their busiest weeks as the norm (*New York Times*, May 13).

RESIGNING IN PROTEST:

Christopher John Antal, a Unitarian Universalist pastor and U.S. Army chaplain, resigned from the army in protest of the military’s use of drones. In a letter to President Obama, he wrote that the White House “continues to claim the right to kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, for secret reasons, based on secret evidence, in a secret process, undertaken by unidentified officials. I refuse to support this policy of unaccountable killing.” Antal had condemned drone warfare in a sermon to troops and private contractors in 2012, which led to an unrequested departure from Afghanistan where he was stationed at the time. He said that if the United States is one nation under



MOSES AWAITS THE WORD OF GOD

God, then it is not only under God's grace and protection, but also God's judgment (Military.com, May 12).

DEAL OR NO DEAL: Six months after a nuclear deal was reached between the United States and Iran, Iran hasn't realized the economic stimulus it expected from the lifting of economic sanctions and gaining access to about \$100 billion of assets frozen in foreign banks. U.S. laws are still very restrictive on dealing with Iran, and foreign businesses haven't flooded to Iran as expected because European and Asian banks are afraid of violating American sanctions and being subjected to penalties. The Iranian government accuses the United States of obstructing Iran's effort to join the world economy. Relaxing sanctions takes congressional action, something unlikely to happen in an election year (*Newsweek*, May 18).

POOR GETTING POORER: American households in extreme poverty increased between 1996 and 2011. One reason is that jobs were harder to find in 2011. Another reason is that Congress replaced the welfare program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Benefits under TANF are harder to get, and parents without a job can find themselves penniless. States still receive federal funds to help pay the TANF benefits, but they are free to set their own eligibility requirements and shorten the length of time recipients can receive assistance. States can also divert TANF aid to other causes, such as financial aid for college students or pre-kindergarten programs, incentivizing them to be stingy with people in poverty (*New York Review of Books*, June 9).

CASE CLOSED: The occupation of a Massachusetts Roman Catholic church to prevent its closure will end now that the Supreme Court has declined to hear the case, brought by people who have held their ground for 12 years. The occupation dates back to the early days of the clergy sexual abuse scandal when the archdiocese of Boston decided to close and sell some 70 churches to cover its legal costs. Working in shifts since 2004, a group of about 100 people have

“Lucky is too cheap a word. I really feel *blessed*. I truly believe God has given me these gifts. He gave it to me at a young age, and he's allowed me to keep it all these years? That's a gift. I say this because I believe it: I should spend a lot more time on my knees than I do.”

— **Vin Scully**, 88, regarded as one of the best baseball broadcasters ever. He is in his 67th year of broadcasting, which he says is his last (*Wall Street Journal*, May 22).

“We're going to lose all our heritage, all our culture.”

— Choctaw chief **Albert Naquin**, responding to the federal government's attempt to move the sinking community of Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana, to a drier place, making them climate change refugees. Almost all the residents of Isle de Jean Charles are members of Chief Naquin's tribe (*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 3).

maintained a constant presence in St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Church, which was built in the 1960s. Initially, it was one of more than a dozen Boston-area Catholic churches occupied by parishioners. The other groups either lost their battle in the courts or abandoned their efforts. The parishioners held a farewell celebration at the church in Scituate, about 25 miles southeast of Boston, on the last Sunday of May (Reuters).

VIRTUAL SACRAMENTS? The Church of Scotland is launching a two-year study of online interaction with the church and questions this raises about membership and sacraments. The church, known as The Kirk, has seen its rolls fall by almost one-third between 2004 and 2015 to just under 364,000 members. The church's Legal Questions Committee is pushing for “a wide-ranging review of

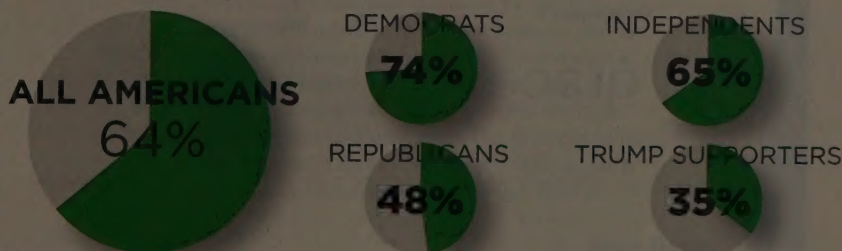
practice and procedure which is impacted by the use of new technology in church life.” David Robertson, moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, whose members broke from the Church of Scotland in 1843, said: “At best it is a cheap gimmick, at worst it comes across as yet another desperate attempt by a declining national church to shore up its numbers and justify its existence” (RNS).

CHAIR IN ATHEISM: Lou Appignani is donating \$2.2 million to the University of Miami to endow a chair for the “study of atheism, humanism and secular ethics.” Appignani, an 83-year-old Floridian, said, “I'm trying to eliminate discrimination against atheists.” Militant atheist Richard Dawkins lauded this endowment, saying, “It's a very bold step of the University of Miami, and I hope there will be others” (Patheos, May 20).

IMMIGRANTS WELCOME . . . OR NOT

SOURCE: PRRI

People who are **not bothered** when they encounter immigrants who speak little or no English



Faith in translation

by Trey Hall

I RECENTLY moved from Chicago to Birmingham, England, after my spouse got a job here. Since then, I've been regularly embarrassing myself during simple acts of conversation. I'll make an earnest comment—such as saying “Wow, I'm stuffed!” at the end of a dinner party—and be met with unexpected silence, disgust, or laughter. It's often said that the United States and the United Kingdom are separated by a common language. A standard phrase on one side of the Atlantic might make no sense at all on the other—or it might make a totally different impression from the one intended. I find myself constantly trying to translate between one version of English and the other.

I've also been visiting a lot of churches. I'm searching for a community of people to share life with; I also have a professional interest as a minister, church planter (in the United Kingdom, a “pioneer”), and ministry coach. One thing I've been struck with in many of the places I've visited—from High Church establishments to evangelical church

plants to Pentecostal prayer meetings to fringe missional collectives—is how thoroughly their liturgical words and practices assume that Christianity is the first language of the people gathered there. Words like *sin*, *grace*, *gospel*, *atonement*, *salvation*, *offering*, *tithe*, and *communion* are mostly used without being defined or interpreted. (This is certainly not a situation unique to England.)

A fast-growing number of people don't have a religious vocabulary.

To be sure, many such words are particularly beautiful and beautifully particular. Few synonyms could adequately convey their richness. So don't get me wrong: I don't believe that we should jettison our ancient vocabulary. Instead, we should teach it compellingly and as early as possible. When it comes to learning languages, children have a tremendous advantage. After puberty, both the brain's plasticity to internalize new con-

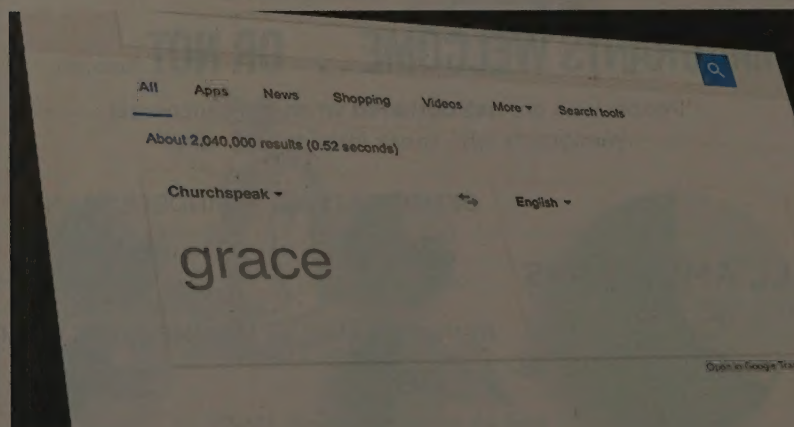
structions and the mouth's flexibility to make new sounds begin to diminish. Likewise, it's important to learn Christianity early, as a first language.

Some parents make the conscious choice not to raise their children in a faith community, so that when they're older they can make their own religious choices. When parents tell me they're considering this, I challenge them to

instead give their children a deeply rooted spiritual communication system that they will be able to employ intuitively throughout their lives. If at some point their children want to abandon this first language or to learn a second, they can still make that choice. (Interestingly, linguists say that knowing a first language really well—how it's structured and how it works—makes it much easier to learn a second language later in life.) But the risk of waiting until some future age when they can “decide for themselves” is that they won't learn any faith language at all.

Indeed, a fast-growing number of people do not have a religious first language. And many churches don't seem eager to learn how to connect with them—how to teach Christianity as a second language as well as a first.

What does it take to accept this task and to learn to translate Christianity into the secular vernacular? Without doing this, it's hard to engage those who are investigating spirituality and faith with no prior religious language or experience. Engaging them requires, at the



most basic level, the capacity to communicate effectively.

Teaching Christianity as a second language will require developing the capacity of individuals and congregations to say something about the gospel. For most of us this will probably mean learning how to say something about our own experience of the gospel. This may be why some Christianity-as-first-language speakers are reluctant to embrace this ministry of translation: it might require them to testify, in descriptive and narrative language, to what it feels like to undergo the gospel in their own skin. For many Christians, this is awkward territory.

In fact, some of us find the prospect of personal testimony so uncomfortable that we have defaulted almost completely to nonverbal forms of evangelism. As long as we don't have to actually say anything about God, we're OK. We've heard sermon after sermon, usually from first-language speakers, on that old chestnut misattributed to St. Francis: "Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words." It's a lovely line, and of course we should be concerned with letting the gospel permeate all of our affairs. But in this day and age, especially when it comes to ministry with the next generations, words will be necessary much of the time. Quoting St. Francis to avoid having to find words doesn't just suggest a failure of nerve and a lack of verve. It can also be a kind of first-language privilege.

As Tim Keller points out, nearly every time the word *euangelion* appears in the New Testament, it's connected to a verbal expression of the good news. The gospel must be "en-worded," and not only that: it must be translated into a language that makes sense to hearers who don't speak Christianity.

How can we practice our language skills? In many contexts, corporate worship remains a primary gathering for Christians. So it's a good place to work on shifting congregational culture toward a ministry of translation.

One way to do this is to fold into worship some descriptions—carefully craft-

ed but not pedantic—of different elements of the service. Along with helping people who are just learning the language of Christianity, this can be valuable to those who have been sitting in the pews for years using language they don't really understand. Another strategy is to try to hold together didactic and narrative preaching traditions. We can dive deeply into ideas, refusing to dumb them down—while also approaching them narratively, as Jesus did, weaving in human stories and pointing frequently to worldly things.

Perhaps most important is recovering the practice of lay testimony. When it comes to starting and revitalizing churches, there are few panaceas—but for my money, this is one of them. Each week, a different layperson might be

invited to stand up for five minutes and share how God is moving (or not moving) in their life. True, unvarnished stories are best—as Proverbs 14:25 says, a truthful witness saves lives.

One helpful exercise for Christianity-as-first-language speakers is to translate the word *gospel* into ten or 12 words of compelling, strictly secular language. Another is to follow the example of Alcoholics Anonymous—a group that is excellent at translation—and break down *salvation* into a series of three to five steps, again using compelling secular language.

The church includes first- and second-language speakers, with a myriad of gorgeous accents. Let's practice together, all testifying to what it's like to encounter God.

CC

What people gave me one night in rural coastal Oregon after I told them stories in a lovely tiny library

A stack of brownies as big as bricks for my children.
A small paper bowl of red and orange salmonberries.
An antler from a spike buck, perhaps three years old.
Perhaps a black-tailed deer, perhaps now gargantuan.
Cranberry syrup made up the coast about eight miles.
Handshakes of all sorts. A photograph; their one son,
Just deceased; *we just thought that you should have it*.
Blackberry jam, homemade. Honey, homemade. Salal
Sprigs, elderberry sprigs. Canned smoked salmon and
Tuna, caught about two miles to the west of where we
stood in the library. A baby girl hoisted up so she and
I could look each other in the eye. She sneezed. Books
To scrawl upon. Huckleberry leaves. A cougar's tooth,
Gleaming. A man gripped me by the shoulder and said
Nothing. His was a remarkably expressive grip. People
Give you things without any things in their hands. You
Know what I mean. They are eloquent without needing
To speak. We hardly ever talk about this. I shuffled off
With my arms full. I had been slathered by the glorious
And only a little of it was in the basket I tucked into my
Car. People were hungry for something. I knew what it
Was and it wasn't me; but I could tell stories that could
Point to what it is we are all starving for. We work and
Yearn and struggle and dream for it. Occasionally when
We gather together, if there is humility, if there is story,
If there is honesty, then there is just enough food for all.

Brian Doyle

Trey Hall, an urban church planter and a United Methodist minister, works as a ministry coach with the Epicenter Group.

In Tunisia, a move toward 'Muslim democracy'

Tunisia's Ennahda movement, the most successful Islamist party to emerge from the Arab Spring revolts early in this decade, has left political Islam and declared that its members will operate in the country as "Muslim democrats."

A recent party congress in Hammamet voted almost unanimously to drop Ennahda's traditional religious work and participate in Tunisian politics as a regular political party.

The reform represented a major victory for Ennahda's leader Rached Ghannouchi, 74, an activist who developed into an influential Muslim thinker during his 22 years of exile while Tunisia was governed by dictators.

Given a hero's welcome on his return in 2011, he proved himself an astute politician as he guided his party during a stormy period in power and then bowed to public pressure and agreed to a 2014 election won by Ennahda's secular conservative rivals.

"We have to differentiate between political and religious activity... we want religion to unite and not divide Tunisians," Ghannouchi told the Paris daily *Le Monde* before the congress opened on May 20. "We want a party that talks about everyday problems, and not one that talks about the last judgment and paradise. We want religious activity to be completely independent of political activity."

One reason for the change was Tunisia's relative political stability and the prospect for elections next year, he explained.

Another was that the so-called Islamic State movement had so discredited political Islam that Ennahda had to "show the difference between the Muslim democracy we support and the

extremist jihadist Islam from which we want to distance ourselves."

A quick look at the other countries most active in the Arab Spring protests shows how different Tunisia's path has been. Egypt also elected an Islamist government, but its Muslim Brotherhood leaders were overthrown by the army in 2013 after trying to impose their religious views on the society.

Libya fell into chaos after ousting dictator Muammar Qaddafi and split into two, with rival governments in the east and west and an Islamic State stronghold



Rached Ghannouchi

along the coast between them. Syria descended into a bloody civil war that has become an international crisis.

Ennahda, which means "renaissance" in Arabic, began as an underground Islamist movement inspired by Iran's Islamic Revolution and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Many leaders spent years in jail or exile.

Ghannouchi went abroad, but unlike many other Arab intellectuals who chose refuge in another Muslim country or France, he moved to London. He later said his 22 years in Britain showed him that a secular democracy could grant Muslims more freedom than the religious states most Islamists dreamed of.

His reformist writings won a follow-

ing in Turkey in the 1990s, inspiring the Justice and Development Party, known as AKP, which has governed the country since 2002. Following the Muslim democratic model, it turned Turkey into a modern political and economic success story and looked like an inspiration for other Muslim countries.

The AKP's star has faded badly in recent years, however, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become increasingly autocratic, amassing power and crushing his opposition.

[Ebrahim Moosa, professor of Islamic studies at the University of Notre Dame, spent time with Ghannouchi while he was in exile. He was not surprised that Ghannouchi, when he returned to Tunisia, learned from what happened in Turkey and Egypt.]

"The Islamist groups in Tunisia have shown that they can think differently," Moosa said. "There has been a theological tradition in North Africa, *maslaha*, to give priority of what is in the best interest of the community and the public."

This allows Ennahda some flexibility in its leadership, Moosa said.

"In Tunisia you have Shari'a meeting John Dewey," he said, referring to the U.S. social reformer, who was a proponent of pragmatism. "It's a different kind of leadership."

Ennahda candidates were elected in October 2011 to lead a transition government meant to draft a new constitution and hold parliamentary elections. While it preached reform, the party turned a blind eye to radicals trying to impose Saudi-inspired orthodox Islam on the country, sometimes by force.

But after two assassinations of leftist politicians in 2013 and the army coup against the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, Ghannouchi signaled he

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S.-ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM VIA CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE

was ready to reach a compromise with the secular opposition.

The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, a team of four civil society activists, guided the delicate transition to an election the following year and was awarded the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize for its work.

Although Ennahda has left religious activity, it has not renounced Islam itself. Instead, the party's new identity stresses

faith as the source of inspiration for its center-right policies, much like the Christian Democratic parties that emerged in Europe after World War II.

Ghannouchi's role in Ennahda should guarantee this reform remains party policy for the immediate future. What happens after he steps down is less clear, since the party's members who spent many of the dictatorship years in jail are

often more militant than reformist former exiles like Ghannouchi.

"We are leaving political Islam to enter into Muslim democracy," Ghannouchi told *Le Monde*, avoiding the word *secular*. "Ennahda is a democratic and civil political party based on Muslim and modern civilizational values." —Tom Heneghan, Religion News Service; Celeste Kennel-Shank, the CHRISTIAN CENTURY

United Methodists punt on LGBT inclusion, reject divestment

IN AN EFFORT to stave off a schism, the United Methodist Church deferred a decision on whether to allow same-sex marriage and accept LGBT clergy.

At the church's General Conference, a gathering every four years to chart the course of the global denomination, held May 10–20 in Portland, Oregon, delegates rejected divestment from Israel and fossil fuels and celebrated the Imagine No Malaria campaign. The church also decided to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a pro-abortion rights group, and the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, which critics see as anti-Israel.

In the church's largest-ever global health initiative, United Methodists have raised \$68 million of their \$75 million goal for malaria prevention, treatment, and education in sub-Saharan Africa since 2008.

On sexuality, Bruce Ough, president of the Council of Bishops, said the church is considering convening a special session of its General Conference in 2018 or 2019 to discuss LGBT issues. The church, with some 12 million members worldwide, including more than 7 million in the United States, is experiencing its greatest growth in places where many members are theologically conservative on LGBT issues, particularly in African nations.

"We recommend the General Conference defer all votes regarding human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special commission named by the Council of Bishops," he said.

The global body of delegates voted 428–405 to allow the bishops to create such a commission that would undergo "a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality."

Pressure to make the United Methodist Church a more LGBT-friendly church has increased in the United States since the Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage. Just before the conference started, 111 United Methodist clergy came out as LGBT, an action that could expose them to discipline.

"We keep wrestling with this just like the American public keeps wrestling with it," said Adam Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor and author. "The United Methodist Church in so many ways represents that broad spectrum of American people."

On another contentious issue, the Israel-Palestine conflict, a committee rejected four divestment or investment screening resolutions related to companies involved in the occupation of Palestinian territories. The church already opposes the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

This setback for divestment supporters came after presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, a lifelong Methodist, released a letter the day before the conference began in which she opposed the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement as unfair to Israel and counterproductive to peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians.

The question of BDS and Israel's

occupation has been a prickly one within mainline denominations, though the movement has been gaining traction. Although the Episcopal Church has rejected BDS efforts, the United Church of Christ in 2015 and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2014 voted to divest from companies they deem complicit in the occupation.

As they considered the relative merits of divestment and shareholder advocacy, delegates also rejected a proposal to add an investment screen for fossil fuels for the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

United Methodist delegates also asked their mission agency to withdraw from the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, which the petition described as a "one-sided political coalition" that seeks to isolate Israel "while overlooking anti-Israel aggression."

Armando Arellano, a delegate from Ohio, said that the action meant "withdrawing our commitment to be an agent of peace and justice."

The United Methodist Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women also left the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, of which they were founding members in 1973, United Methodist News Service reported.

Susan Burton, an executive with the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, said no church dollars directly fund the coalition.

"This interfaith organization is richer from hearing our voice," she said. —Emily McFarlan Miller and Lauren Markoe, Religion News Service; added sources

Supreme Court sends cases on contraceptive mandate back to lower courts

The Supreme Court sought a compromise on challenges by nonprofit religious groups to the federal requirement that their insurance offer free coverage of contraceptives to female employees.

The justices unanimously sent the cases back to federal appeals courts in hopes that they can emerge with a way to honor the objections of religious nonprofit groups, such as charities and hospitals, while still guaranteeing free birth control to their employees.

"The court expresses no view on the merits of the cases," the opinion stated. "In particular, the court does not decide whether petitioners' religious exercise has been substantially burdened, whether the government has a compelling interest, or whether the current regulations are the least restrictive means of serving that interest."

The May 16 ruling was another example of the eight-member court's relative inertia following the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. Already this year, the court has tied 4-4 in three cases, including a major labor rights case, and has greatly reduced the number of new cases it is accepting for next term.

Religious nonprofits that have fought the Obama administration's contraceptives rule were pleased. Most appeals courts had sided with the administration, while only one went the other way.

"There is still work to be done, but today's decision indicates that we will ultimately prevail in court," said Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which represented the Little Sisters of the Poor in one of the seven lawsuits.

Abortion rights and women's groups opposed the decision.

"We are disappointed that the court did not resolve once and for all whether the religious beliefs of religiously affiliated nonprofit employers can block women's seamless access to birth con-



PLEASED BY RULING: Loraine McGuire of Little Sisters of the Poor (center) speaks to the media after *Zubik v. Burwell*, an appeal brought by Christian groups demanding full exemption from the requirement to provide insurance covering contraception under the Affordable Care Act, was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington on March 23.

trol," Gretchen Borchelt of the National Women's Law Center said.

The battle over the so-called contraceptive mandate was one of the high court's biggest issues this term, pitting religious liberty against reproductive rights for the second time in three years. In 2014, the court ruled 5-4 that for-profit corporations whose owners objected to the rule could have their insurance plans deliver the health benefit directly.

That same accommodation previously had been offered to religious groups such as charities, hospitals, and universities, but dozens of them complained they would be tainted even by transferring responsibility for services they equate with abortion to insurers or third-party administrators. They sought the same blanket exemption granted churches and other religious institutions under the Affordable Care Act.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor reiterated that point in a concurrence signed by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The court's opinion, she wrote, "does not . . . endorse the petitioners' position that the existing regulations substantially burden their religious exercise or that contracep-

tive coverage must be provided through a 'separate policy.'"

The justices could have issued a 4-4 decision that would have upheld all lower court rulings, but those differ from one part of the country to another. They also could have rescheduled the case for when the court is back to full strength. But that could take a year or more, because Senate Republicans have refused to consider President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland, a federal appeals court judge, to replace Scalia.

Instead, the court issued an unusual order shortly after hearing the case in which it suggested ways for the two sides to come together. Both sides responded, leading the justices to send the cases back to the four appeals courts from whence they came.

All but one of those courts had upheld the government mandate. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals—covering Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota—however, ruled in favor of the nonprofit organizations. —Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

Israeli civics textbook reinvigorates debate on nation's character

CAN ISRAEL BE both Jewish and democratic? For generations of Jewish Israelis, the answer was presumed to be yes, but it's no longer so simple.

The issue has already brought down one national government and has deep implications for Israel's ability to accommodate Palestinians' political aspirations.

For Israeli high school students, the path to the answer was supposed to start in Israel's official civics textbook, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, which was recently released in a revised edition.

Civics educators and academics allege that political appointees in Israel's Education Ministry—controlled by the right-wing Jewish Home party—rewrote the textbook to water down discussion of democracy and Israel's Arab minority, while filling it with content emphasizing Israel's Jewish religious character.

One copy editor who reviewed a final draft for the Education Ministry described the revised book as “a hostile takeover” of the civics curriculum.

Political battles over civics textbooks and how they teach history and current affairs have been fought around the world, from the United States to South Korea. The problem is especially acute in Israel because liberals, religious nationalists, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Arab citizens share little common ground in their relations with the state, said a prominent Israeli law professor.

“Civics is a place where one should find what are common denominators of all parts of Israeli society—both Jewish and non-Jewish parts,” said Mordechai Kremnitzer, who is also a vice president at the Israel Democracy Institute. “Not enough thought was given to what brings us together.”

Defending the revised textbook, Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett has said that Israel's secular schools need a curriculum with more Jewish content. Bennett and his Jewish Home party favor Israeli annexation of the West

Bank and oppose creation of a Palestinian state.

“The book makes significant mention of the Jewish identity of the Jewish state, and we're proud of that,” he said.

The dispute reflects a deepening fissure between the country's religious conservatives, more confident and assertive after the right won the last three parliamentary elections under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Israel's secular left, which despite retaining influence throughout much of the government and cultural establishment feels threatened.

“Given the depth of the political divide, it's not surprising that we should have such controversy,” said Daniel Statman, a professor of philosophy at the University of Haifa and a fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute, a non-partisan think tank in Jerusalem. “Each political side in this debate wants a say in how to educate the next generation.”

It also highlights decades-old friction in a country that has never been able to draft a constitution because its Arab, religious, and secular groups cannot reach a formal agreement on the basics of Israel's system of government.

“The fundamental problem is the lack of a common civic language,” wrote Naftali Trachtenberg, a fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, another non-partisan think tank, in an article on the Israeli news website Ynet. “A democracy is dependent on a healthy civil society in which a majority of its components share the same civil concepts.”

Revision of the 15-year-old textbook has been in the works for several years, but in the months before its release a string of educators who worked on the book sounded concern about the content. Several authors asked that their names be removed from the book.

In a five-page protest letter to the ministry, Yehuda Yaari, the book's copy editor, wrote that five of the six ministry

officials responsible for the updated version were Orthodox Jews and that the book was strewn with right-wing political bias.

Tamar Hermann, a political science professor at Israel's Open University who advised the ministry on a previous draft, said fundamental concepts about citizenship were relegated to the end of the book.

The uproar over the civics textbook is the latest in a series of controversies in the past year in which religiously observant ministers in the Netanyahu government have been accused of politicizing culture: a novel about an Arab-Jewish romance was removed from high school reading lists, and public funding was removed from a play about a convicted Arab militant.

In the case of the textbook and other disputes, Israeli right-wing politicians have insisted that they are simply carrying out their electoral mandate to implement a more nationalist policy.

Avraham Diskin, a Hebrew University political science professor who has consulted on previous editions of the civics textbook, said civics education curricula in Israel has for decades been dominated by secular “post-Zionist” educators who focus on “slogans” like tolerance and equality. Israeli educators mistakenly believe that democratic systems of government must be liberal by definition, he said.

Haaretz noted in a May 13 editorial that the final edition included small changes as a result of the criticism it received before its release, but the text basically stayed the same.

“The book's message is impossible to mistake: Jewish identity, as expressed in the state's definition of itself and in the public sphere, takes priority over civic identity,” *Haaretz* wrote. “The text contains no model of shared life between Jews and Arabs. The Jews' rights are clear; the Arabs' place is restricted; and the walls separating them are only raised even higher.”—Joshua Mitnick, *The Christian Science Monitor*; added source

Church of John Coltrane forced out of historic jazz district in San Francisco

The altar is set with a drum kit, a keyboard, a saxophone, and—most importantly—a much-loved vinyl rendering of a jazz classic, complete with liner notes.

This is St. John Coltrane Church, a 48-year-old San Francisco institution, where Sunday masses are built on a live performance of *A Love Supreme*, a 33-minute opus that saxophonist Coltrane wrote to express the awesomeness of God.

“St. John Coltrane referred to this music as being an expression of higher ideals,” said Wanika Stephens, the church’s pastor, who played the electric bass guitar during a recent Sunday mass, one of the last in the church’s former storefront location in the Fillmore District. A standing-room-only crowd of about 80 people moved to the beat, some from the neighborhood and some from as far away as Germany, Spain, and Australia.

“The music has a power to unify us, to bring us together,” she said. “Because of that, he felt that a brotherhood was there in the music, and if you had that brotherhood, you would have no more poverty, no more war. The music has that power.”

This belief is reflected in an oversized icon of the musician that dominates one wall of the church. His penetrating eyes stare straight out, his left hand clasping a saxophone spewing flames, his right hand clutching a banner that reads, “Let us sing all songs to God to whom all praise is due.”

Prices are rising in the Fillmore, once home to numerous jazz clubs. Church officials say the landlord stopped accepting their monthly \$1,600 rent checks two years ago and attempted eviction last September. That was averted with a petition of 4,000 signatures, far above the church’s membership of 700.

Landlord Floyd Trammell—himself a pastor at another church—agreed to withdraw eviction proceedings if the church would vacate by the end of April. Trammell has repeatedly declined to discuss the eviction, issuing a statement that



SACRED JAZZ: *Marlee-I Mystic sings while Landres King plays drums and Franco King III plays the keyboard during a mass centered on A Love Supreme at the St. John Coltrane Church in San Francisco, which recently was evicted from its historic Fillmore District location.*

reads, in part, that he “operates in the same ruthless economy that has engulfed the entire Fillmore District.”

The church’s last Sunday on Fillmore Street was April 24. Church officials raised more than \$11,000 for moving costs—including for its altar, instruments, and multiple eight-foot-tall Byzantine-style icons—through crowd-sourcing. A few weeks later the church announced that it had found a new location in a different neighborhood nearby.

“The ruling principle of God’s love is a love supreme,” said Franco W. King, the church’s founder, archbishop, and sax player. “The saxophone is like a surgical instrument that is capable of cutting away fear, of cutting away evil. . . . And John Coltrane is the supreme surgeon.”

King and his wife, Marina, attended a Coltrane show in 1965 and “had what they call a ‘sound baptism,’” said Nicholas Baham III, author of *The Coltrane Church: Apostles of Sound, Agents of Social Justice*. “They saw the Holy Ghost walk out on stage with John Coltrane, and the movement started from there.”

The Kings started the church in their San Francisco living room after Coltrane’s death in 1967. Three daughters and a son are all ordained clergy in the church and play instruments or sing in the liturgy. Grandchildren play the drums and keyboards and dot the chairs.

While church members revere Coltrane, they do not worship him. And while other churches have incorporated jazz into their worship services, the St. John Coltrane Church is different in that its members see the music as a vehicle to “Coltrane consciousness,” a higher state of mind achieved through the music and through living Coltrane’s antipoverty, antiwar, social justice beliefs.

“They use the music as a meditation, and they glean everything they can about living from Coltrane’s life and writing and music,” Baham said.

The church aligned itself with the African Orthodox Church, a denomination with Episcopal roots, in 1981. It moved from the King living room to other places in the Fillmore District.

When it departed, the area lost “a very important social justice player that has fought environmental racism, economic racism,” Baham said.

Stephens, the pastor, said there is an “energy of love, of truth, and of light that is compelling” the church forward.

“It is really larger than myself or any of the clergy there, but it is certainly something we all feel, and we are all a part of it,” she said. “It is a labor born out of love, and it is a service of love that we hunger for.” —Kimberly Winston, Religion News Service

People



■ The Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles, in Gower, Missouri, spend their days in silence—except when they are singing sacred music.

The success of the cloistered nuns' albums has paid for building their retreat centers and living quarters; they recently released a new album, *Adoration at Ephesus*.

Mother Cecilia, the prioress, said silence and prayer inspires their music.

"The voice of our Lord comes to us in whispers, so we have to be quiet so we can hear it," she said. —Karen Pulfer Focht, Religion News Service

■ When **Matthew Kukah** first arrived as the new bishop of the Sokoto Diocese in northern Nigeria's Muslim heartland, he received an unexpectedly warm welcome for a Christian leader.



PHOTO BY BARBARA JOHNSON, COURTESY OF THE KELLOGG INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

According to Kukah, cultural and religious discrimination in many parts of the north can go all the way to the state governor level. But on the day of Kukah's installation in 2011, the local sultan paid some of his guests' hotel bills.

Once called a "rabble rouser for peace" by Nigeria's press, Kukah has been a key voice for unity as he has served in a number of high-level interreligious and governmental roles. Last year, he convened the national peace committee before Nigeria's presidential election. The committee brokered an

agreement between former president Goodluck Jonathan and new president Muhammadu Buhari, ensuring the former accepted the result and handed over the reins of government peacefully.

Nigeria desires Christian-Muslim unity, he said, noting that in 1990, 20 years after the nation's civil war, a coup failed because it was going to remove the 12 northern states. People do not want to be separated, he said, but the country still needs a plan for bringing people together.

"The greatest problem the government has is in its inability to effectively communicate with citizens," Kukah said.

Nigeria's population of more than 180 million people is roughly 50 percent Muslim, 40 percent Christian, and 10 percent indigenous beliefs. The Muslim population is focused in the north and the Christian population in the south. Comprising four states and a population of 20 million people, Kukah's roughly 41-square-mile diocese is home to around 400,000 Catholics.

Kukah has emphasized education as a means of preventing extremism in groups such as Boko Haram, whose name is often translated as "Western education is forbidden." Kukah noted that while 60 to 70 percent of Nigeria's literate population is Christian, among northern Muslims perhaps 10 percent are educated.

"I'm explaining to the governors that we have about 10 to 15 million young kids who are out of school or on the streets across the 11 or 12 states in northern Nigeria," he said. "In a country that is developing, such a huge number of uneducated and unskilled people will mean a combustible environment from where Boko Haram and all these agents of violence will continue to feed."

Christian schools in the north have Muslim students and provide Islamic education teachers, he said.

"The problem with the Qur'anic education in northern Nigeria is that it was never designed to manage pluralism," he said. "It is the responsibility of the state government to design a curriculum that takes cognizance of these realities."

Robert Dowd, a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, helped bring Kukah to Indiana in October to speak about Christian-Muslim rela-

tions. Dowd attributes Kukah's unifying work to his upbringing in an interreligious setting in Kaduna, in northwest Nigeria.

"Growing up where he did, I think he was really inspired to be a bridge builder, to promote mutual respect and peace," Dowd said.

Kukah relates with respect to both Christians and Muslims, including those who are poor and on the margins, Dowd said, amplifying their concerns to business leaders and government officials, including presidents Jonathan and Buhari.

"He has a very fine way of helping people to see through the complexity of a situation, to see the challenge at hand," Dowd said. —Josh Kenworthy, *The Christian Science Monitor*; Celeste Kennel-Shank, *CHRISTIAN CENTURY*

■ **Tom Lin**, a Chicago native and former missionary to Mongolia, was named president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, the national ministry to 40,200 university students, based in Madison, Wisconsin. He is the first person of color in the role.



Most recently, he served as head of Urbana 15, InterVarsity's missions conference, where leaders pledged support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

"Who I am reflects the leadership characteristic that seems crucial in today's world—the ability to cross cultures," Lin said. "I've lived cross-culturally practically every moment of my life, from my Taiwanese household to my very white school. I feel a particular aspiration to reach out to the whole church, people of every ethnicity and culture."

InterVarsity's main purpose is still to establish communities on campuses—it recently achieved a milestone of 1,000 chapters—yet it has always been innovative, Lin said.

"If you stay doing what you are doing, eventually you will go into decline," he said. "But we need to be mindful of commitments that will not change." —Timothy C. Morgan, Religion News Service

RELIGION NEWS SERVICE PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERVARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

LIVING The Word

Luke 9, 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 10:1-11, 16-20

NOT JUST 12, BUT 70. Luke multiplies the other Gospel narratives' number of disciples: 70 of them, two by two. Jesus sends them ahead to prepare the way, to find a meeting place, to do logistics, to plan and listen and share over food and drink. To make a way when it seems there is no way to bring hope, peace, stability, and a future.

Jesus says he is sending them out "like lambs into the midst of wolves." We live in a time of constant news and information. Intimacy is erased, privacy laughable, rhetoric rude and rusty. In such a context, the notion of going out as lambs to wolves seems apt, even if the wolves and lambs themselves may be interchangeable.

Yet Luke's message is one of peace and opportunity—because, as the 70 are to proclaim, the kingdom or realm of God is near. All people everywhere are to hear this news, this story that echoes an inclusive priority: God speaks to all people, invites all people. No one is to be left out of hearing this news about the gift of life.

This isn't, however, a campaign or a marketing strategy. The point is to be with other people. The first priority is people themselves, not information to be shared. Hospitality is central to the Lucan report: "Eat what is set before you." Fred Craddock writes simply that food was a critical issue in the spread of the gospel.

And so it remains. I travel a lot and spend countless hours in airports. When a flight is late, my agenda is delayed and I am stuck, as are those around me. We sigh and mutter and search for plugs to keep our technology working. Food becomes a source of comfort—and an opportunity to strike up conversation. Rather than hunker down and isolate ourselves in frustration and angst, we are blessed to meet people from all over the world. We can even share concerns, hopes, and dreams; we can say more than just what we do and where we live.

It is a reminder of the ongoing tone of our time, perhaps of every time and place: eschatology. What will the future be? And how single-minded should we be about that? Twitter feed notwithstanding, or late flights that scramble our carefully crafted schedules.

Travel light; take little with you; pay attention to the people

in your path; proclaim the kingdom of God. Here is the sticky part: What is it to proclaim such a message? N. T. Wright suggests that it calls us in this present moment to a deeper authenticity in how we live. We are to engage in community, in that which brings justice, in doing the work of the gospel—not because it will all be over soon, but because doing so allows for life in the here and now. The gospel compels us to a life motivated by grace and love as gift.

The 70 are motivated by their deep knowledge and experience of this love and grace. We too are offered a chance to begin again, to receive forgiveness. While it's tempting to seek an easy triumphalism, we can find instead in Luke's narrative the source of all that is and will be. We then participate in the living faith with meaning and purpose, in community.

People seek meaning, community, purpose, a source for engaging the world as willing participants in it. Every generation wants this. We talk a lot about young adults, what choices they will make and why. It is too easy to spend life looking at

Doing the work of the gospel gives life here and now.

data, lamenting a past, delaying decisions. But in every generation we face difficult choices, have moments of uneasy peace, and wonder about our mistakes and failures. As this week's passage from Isaiah indicates, restoration is an ongoing pattern of the human condition. And the text from Luke is for all generations in their hardships, quandaries, and injustices. The story of the 70 reminds us of God's overarching purpose and presence.

Discourse analysis reminds us that all talk and descriptions of the world are by definition partial. We can't capture the whole of life in word or action. None of us is able to make perfect decisions that result in perfect outcomes. And our efforts to identify God's purpose and presence will fall short as well.

This is a hard truth to accept, but it does not negate the gospel. Sometimes we project our certainty of belief onto the outcomes of our work. But faith orients us not for success as much as for authenticity. The 70 return with joy and are reminded: this is not a joy based on successful outcomes. It is a joy rooted in faith, in an orientation toward living a kingdom life now on earth as it is in heaven.

Reflections on the lectionary

July 16, 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 10: 25-37

THE LAWYER ASKS, what must I do to be saved? Is this a test? Is he questioning Jesus' agenda?

Stephen Prothero wrote several years ago that as a culture the West was losing a connection to the religious stories that shape values and decision making. Fewer people know the story in detail and can place it in the context of the whole of the biblical text. This leaves us disoriented and unsure of ourselves. Something is missing, Prothero suggested.

We are caught in a time of competing and continual narratives, of ethical dilemmas we are not prepared to face. Too often, we are caught in a reactive mode, which leads to shouting and fear. Controversy is the watchword of the 21st century. The test is one of discipline and careful thought, of addressing the source. This leads to questions like the lawyer's: *How can this be that you speak the truth?* Through a measured question, he tests the viability of Jesus' words and actions.

In Luke's narrative, Jesus does not provide a straightforward answer. It appears that Jesus knows that simply responding "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and your neighbor as yourself" will not suffice in this encounter. This proves true when the lawyer provides the correct answer, reciting these commandments, but has a further question.

How do we respond to the issues that trouble people deeply? Jesus and the lawyer have a proper debate, but the lawyer continues to wrestle and cannot let go. We too must allow for this when encountering the other, the one who continually pushes at the conclusions we reach. Can we provide the time, space, and safety for ongoing dialogue? Do we have mercy for those who think differently than we do?

I use the word *mercy* intentionally. It occurs at the end of the passage from Luke, after the parable. It is relevant as well at the beginning, in the debate before the parable. Effective dialogue may take a lifetime. It may take countries decades or centuries to find common ground; it may take families hours of counseling and support to resolve issues; it may take a concerted effort for institutions bound by clear

rubrics to become sources for peace and compassion rather than walled buildings for a chosen few. If we read this text with a focus on the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer, it becomes less about the Samaritan's action as a model or an example and more about the discipline to attend to difference. It's about doing what is necessary to "go and do likewise."

These are major issues of our time. We are divided by ideology but also by a lack of awareness that is heightened by unrelenting change. Where can firm footing be found? What binds us together to begin with, if not our rich heritage of religious stories? At the beginning of the story, the lawyer asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. If we were to stop at the pause of the back-and-forth questions between Jesus and the lawyer, to allow the space between the questions to seep into our souls, then a certain kind of transformation might be possible. What is it, after all, that we inherit, if not an identity of some kind and a place of belonging?

Behind so much conflict and violence are long-standing notions of a family or a nation's inheritance. Inheritance is about more than land and property; it is a quality of being and source for decision making. Beyond this is the reality of love and mercy. When we have to consider mercy, this disrupts our routines, our patterns, and our bank accounts.

Behind conflict is a question about inheritance—and identity.

The phrase "good Samaritan" is often trivialized, watered down. We should be careful of this. This is someone who binds the wounds of an enemy and cares for that enemy's needs. Jesus tells of a person's compassion for a bitter rival—a rival for land and territory and a claim to the sacred. Such action upends assumed notions.

The Great Commandment can be mere words, and I think the lawyer knows this in his heart as he comes face to face with the law in action in a person's life. In practice, commandments require mercy—divine mercy. It is the motivator that leads to action.

The author is Susan Kendall, a Presbyterian minister and director of the doctor of ministry program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.



LIFE IN LIMBO FOR AN IMMIGRANT TEEN

Deferred dreams

by Amy Frykholm

MY MOM AGREED to using my whole name," Brayhan Reveles tells me. The question of whether I could use it had loomed over us since I first started talking to Brayhan about his immigration status.

Brayhan is a high school sophomore and one of the 665,000 immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and now have temporary legal standing under President Obama's executive order known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

According to a study by the Center for Migration Studies, 85 percent of DACA recipients grew up in this country and more than 90 percent have already graduated from high school here. Ninety-one percent speak English fluently or exclusively. They have family ties and school and work histories in this country, and their plans for the future—for going to college and starting careers or families—begin and end in the United States. But they have only a fragile legal footing here.

Brayhan's mother, Cristina, heard about my interest in talking to DACA recipients through a mutual friend. At first Cristina wanted nothing to do with me, and I understood: Why should she risk exposing her family? But then a leading presidential candidate said that Mexico was sending "people who have lots of problems" to the United States and that immigrants were bringing drugs and crime with them and were "rapists." I soon got a call from my friend, who said, "Cristina would like to talk to you."

"Why did she change her mind?"

"Donald Trump."

President Obama issued DACA in 2012 only after legislation known as the DREAM Act failed in the U.S. Senate by five votes. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act was designed to provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants who did not have documents but had been in the United States since childhood.

After the bill failed in 2010, the young immigrants who had lobbied for the bill, so-called dreamers, pressured Obama to take unilateral action. When Obama attempted to explain to the National Council of La Raza in spring 2011 why he could not bypass Congress, young activists shouted back, "Yes, you can! Yes, you can!" A year later, Obama announced DACA.

Critics called DACA an "illegal amnesty" program and accused Obama of overstepping his authority. Some governors threatened to sue.

Following the outlines of the DREAM Act, DACA allows undocumented immigrants who arrived before their 16th birthday and who have lived continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007, to stay and work for two years. The two years can be extended for another two years. Recipients must not have not committed any crimes and must prove their long-term residency in the United States. They also must be currently enrolled in school or have obtained a high school diploma or served in the military.

Despite young people's lobbying for DACA, no one knew how many would sign up for the program, since enrollment entailed risk: immigrants would have to give personal information to the very same government agency that could deport them and from which their families had been hiding all their lives. To the surprise of some organizers, young people came out in huge numbers. In August 2012, for example, when the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights announced an event that would help young immigrants apply for DACA, 2,200 people were standing in line by 7 a.m. Organizers estimated that 13,000 had arrived by 1 p.m. The response around the rest of the country was just as striking.

Officials estimate that 61 percent of those eligible for DACA have enrolled. Many of the remaining 39 percent may

be young parents, says Hirokazu Yoshikawa, professor of globalization and education at New York University. Older dreamers may feel especially distrustful of the government and most concerned about keeping their families intact. Others may have committed petty crimes as children and are waiting for their records to be cleared.

Among the benefits of DACA is that people can travel to their countries of origin to visit their families. In many states, DACA recipients can also receive in-state tuition for college, go on study abroad trips, apply for driver's licenses, and get jobs that could eventually lead to an opportunity for permanent residency status. DACA is not by any means, however, a solution to the immigration crisis. It does not provide a path to citizenship.

Before I talked to Brayhan, I met with Cristina at her apartment one afternoon before her children came home from school. Although the outside of the building where she lives was dilapidated, the inside of the apartment was large and carefully decorated. School photos of her children stood on the shelves of the entertainment center along with shots of herself with her husband on vacation. Everything had a feeling of permanence and care. A little dog she alternately called "Darwin" and "Camilo" ran back and forth between the dining room and the living room.

Few people outside the family know that Brayhan is not a citizen.

She told me about her decision as a young woman of 20 to come to the United States with her husband and Brayhan, who was then a baby. "I did not like the culture that some of the families in Mexico had—where the husband worked here, and they saw him just once a year. I needed to raise my children together with my husband."

During the 15 years that they've lived in the United States, the family's status has been a kind of open secret. When Brayhan was in preschool, Cristina enrolled in a leadership program for Latinas run through Head Start. She successfully advocated for new bus routes that would give every child in the school district access to transportation. She recently helped organize a leadership training institute for immigrants. She's charismatic and smart, and people constantly suggest jobs she might take. Recently someone asked her to run for the school board. It frustrates her to turn down such opportunities.

"I don't want to waste my life," she said. "But sometimes I feel like a pretty bird in a cage who picks up scraps and tries to make the cage more beautiful."

She has carefully guarded the knowledge of Brayhan's legal status. Few people outside the family know that Brayhan is not a citizen. When he was invited to join an elite ski team, she hesitated to give permission because the registration form had a space for a Social Security number. At first she told him he

couldn't ski, and then she changed her mind. But it bothered her to leave the space for the Social Security number blank.

As for Brayhan, he has thrived in this country. He gave the graduation speech for his eighth grade class, after which the high school principal said, "Brayhan, you will be president of the United States someday." He smiled and said thank you, feeling awkward that the principal didn't know about his undocumented status. Later he told his mother, "I know I can't be president. But maybe governor or a senator."

This confidence may be the greatest gift his mother has given him. He plans to earn a high school diploma simultaneously with an associate's degree at the community college and then enroll in a four-year university to study mechanical engineering, business, and politics. When Cristina's English-speaking friends talk about Brayhan's college prospects, they tell her, "Don't aim too small. Think Harvard."

Cristina appreciates their accolades, but she worries: What if all of his dreams end in disappointment? What if all her encouragement only ends up breaking his heart? "I keep thinking, 'I will find a way for him.'"

Brayhan's confidence is evident in his bright green Converse high-top sneakers, his unusual sunglasses, and his red watch that beeps on the hour. When he took part in an environmental project, a leader asked students to talk about the first two weeks of the team's work. "Do you want to submit your thoughts anonymously?" she asked. "Or read them out?"

"Read them out," Brayhan offered. He looked around. "I mean, I don't want to speak for anyone else, but I think we would be comfortable reading them out."

Like most high school students, Brayhan wants a driver's license and a job. Both desires present dilemmas for his parents. If they go to the local office of motor vehicles, will the person behind the desk learn about Brayhan's status? Should they do it anyway, or go to another county, or just tell Brayhan that the risk is too great?

Brayhan is constantly caught between what is normal for a teenager to do and what his legal status does or does not allow.

No decision is simple. But Brayhan is not content to remain hidden. Before working on the environmental project, his previous community service was as a leader in an organization called Student Voice.

Cristina is torn. She is proud of Brayhan's work and high profile in the community but uncertain about what this visibility might cost him. Her husband worries even more than she does. Fernando, whose job in construction has supported the family, told Brayhan, "Don't do that youth researcher position."

Cristina worries that the DACA opportunity will end in disappointment.

Don't go skiing. Why are you doing a sport that is not yours? You will go back to Mexico and then what will you do? This is not your community."

But Cristina sees how her husband's perspective limits Brayhan. "Brayhan says he wants to fly high," she said. Yet without documents, "our world is very small," she acknowledged. She looked around the room. She knows firsthand what it means to say no to opportunities. The personal cost is high. "My world is small now, but I will try to make a pretty world anyway," she said.

Cristina and her husband applied for DACA for Brayhan in the summer of 2015, when he was 15. The preschool had lost the records that could prove how long he had lived here, but the lawyer said that records from kindergarten were fine. Brayhan now has numbers that he can put at the top of registration forms, and Cristina thinks that helps him psychologically as well as practically.

"Now he will feel more comfortable going for financial help. Maybe that number will help him fill out applications. I think it was a gift for all the students. They can feel less pointed at. If someone asks for a number, they can give a number."

The Obama administration was encouraged enough by the response to DACA to attempt expanding it in 2014. It proposed adding one year to each of the DACA recipients' periods of relief (for a total of six years instead of four) and enacting a program called DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents), which would give the parents of DACA recipients the same status as their children. The potential pool of beneficiaries would expand to an estimated 5 million people.

Within hours of Obama's announcement of that plan, Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona—a close ally of Donald Trump—challenged the executive order in federal court. Governors from 26 states filed a similar case in a Texas federal court. Arpaio's case was dismissed, but the Texas federal court blocked both the expansion of DACA and the introduction of DAPA. The Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to review this decision. The court heard the case in April, and a decision is expected this month.

Should the Supreme Court decide that the executive order

Psalm 137 for Noah

Come darling, sit by my side and weep.
I have no lyre, no melodious voice or chant.
I meditate on the Zion I could never grant you.
My son, my roe deer, my rock-rent stream.
My honeysuckle, my salt, my golden spear.
Forgive me your birth in this strange land.
I wanted your infant kisses, your fists clasped
round my neck. I craved you, though you were born
in the wake of my illness, my dim prognosis.
I was selfish: I willed you this woe, this world.
You inherited exile for my sake.

Anya Silver



CAUTIOUS: Brayhan and his mother, Cristina, are not sure how public their lives can be.

did indeed exceed the president's authority or should justices split 4-4, the future of DACA is threatened. Stephen Yale-Loehr, professor of immigration studies at Cornell University, says that a court decision against the expansion of DACA (or one that reverts to the lower court's decision on the question) is not good news for the original DACA. The president can continue it, but once it has expired, it is unlikely to be renewed.

Yale-Loehr says the future of people like Brayhan is "perilous." He does not think that the resources of the Department of Homeland Security will be used to round up and deport DACA recipients, but young people would return to the same situation they were in before the executive action, in which they have no legal path for staying in the only country they know.

Even more crucial to the future of DACA recipients is the presidential election, which has become a referendum on immigration. Arpaio, in endorsing Trump in January, said, "I have fought on the front lines to prevent illegal immigration. I know Donald Trump will stand with me and countless Americans to secure our border." At his rallies, Trump always mentions restriction on immigration and those lines win the loudest applause. Extreme limits on immigration is a central tenant of his political platform.

Fiercely attuned to what happens next in the election, Cristina listens to Spanish language news and scans Facebook for political commentary. She was startled when an undocumented immigrant in a nearby community was pulled from his truck and beaten. The rise of Trump has her wondering if maybe her family should go back to Mexico. "He is awakening racism in those who don't have understanding," she says. She worries that the opportunities DACA created will evaporate and a culture of fear will take over.

"American society is losing a lot of talent," she says. "I feel that the young people are frustrated because they can't move forward; they are in limbo. They can't establish their lives and their work. There are so many who are so talented. I don't understand why a society would deprive itself of so many children with such ability."

After school one day, Brayhan and his mother sit at the kitchen table and look through scholarship applications in a thick black binder provided by the high school's precollegiate program. Again and again they encounter the warning "U.S. citizens only." They turn the page and read about the next school. Cristina tells me, "I want people to know how difficult it is to achieve goals when you are in this situation."

Brayhan will apply this spring for his two-year renewal of DACA. Next fall, he will spend a semester at a private school for outdoor leadership. He isn't concerned that putting himself forward could land him in trouble down the road—but his parents are. "We don't want to lose what we've already gained," Cristina says.

Brayhan is focused on the immediate future. When he has used up the four years of DACA status, he will be 18 and likely have a high school diploma and a two-year college degree.

Looking over the packages of information sent by colleges, Brayhan tells me that some schools are too focused on grades. "Grades are a really superficial way to understand if a person will be successful. I read a study that showed that the character of a person is much more important. I keep my grades up and work hard to create a lasting impact, but there is much more to a person than a piece of paper that classifies you. Character and actions make you who you are no matter where you come from." CC

Don't avoid conflict, avoid triangles

Pastor in the middle

by Doug Bixby

WHEN MY BROTHER was a regional manager for a large corporation, a top-level executive came to visit him at his office. During the visit, my brother shared some of his ideas about the business. The executive responded, "Bixby, we do not pay you to think. We pay you to execute."

The executive didn't want to hear my brother's ideas. He had given my brother responsibility without giving him any authority. When leaders do this—give people responsibility without authority—they're saying that they don't trust those people, and it keeps them from feeling that they're part of a team.

My brother knew that he couldn't change this dynamic, but he would have liked to be able to express an idea or a reaction. He was on the front lines of the business and was trying to share practical insights, not some global vision. Sharing authority does not mean letting go of the steering wheel. Yes, executive leaders need to be the captain of the ship, but they do not always need to have the last word, or in some cases, every word.

In his position as executive minister of the Develop Leaders program in the Evangelical Covenant Church, Mark Novak deals with clergy and the issues pastors face. I recently heard him speak about developing "high trust culture" in churches. A staff needs trust, he said. Without it, staff members tend to reach for control.

I'm convinced that we can best forge and maintain healthy ministry teams by figuring out how to share authority and responsibility more effectively. Clarifying roles helps individuals understand expectations and helps staff discern whether to collaborate, working together on one shared goal, or cooperate, supporting each other in taking on separate goals. Learning how to share authority and responsibility by cooperating and collaborating protects and strengthens staff relationships.

A church I served in Connecticut hired its first youth minister, a young man just out of seminary who happened to be six feet eight inches tall. It was his first youth ministry position. On his candidating weekend he was interacting with church members near the entrance to the church while I was talking with an eighth grade student. She looked up at this tall young man, then turned to me and said, "Pastor Bixby, you're going to have to share your authority with him." I looked back at her and said, "You're right." She nodded, as if making a simple observation, but her comment was one of the most profound things I've ever heard someone say about leadership. I've seen plenty of staff teams fail to function or even fall

apart because they didn't share authority and responsibility in appropriate ways.

Senior clergy get into trouble when they share responsibility without sharing authority. This often happens because the senior clergyperson feels threatened by other staff. Fear keeps them from sharing authority and responsibility—fear that if another staff person shines, the glow around their own ministry will diminish. The truth is the opposite: an associate or assistant clergyperson functioning at a high level in the church usually makes the senior clergyperson look good.

Someone else's success should not be seen as a threat. Problems arise, however, when egos get in the way and power struggles develop. When this happens, leaders stop

Leadership entails steady, trust-filled relationships.

trusting that God can bring out the best in all of us. This points to a need to nurture our spiritual relationship with God. Before we can have trust-filled relationships with each other, we need a trust-filled relationship with God. Only then can we pursue clear and open communication with others. Once we have these ingredients in place, we can build relationships and do work that will have a dramatic impact on our congregations.

I've discovered that some of the best things that happen in the church under my leadership have very little to do with me. Sometimes we need to stay out of God's way and the way of God's people.

Another thing I've learned is that creativity often leads to change, and change tends to lead to conflict. If churches are creative in their ministries, they will experience some conflict. But if there's no conflict, there may not be enough creativity. We must regularly remind ourselves and other staff that conflict is a natural part of all human relationships and organizations; it contributes to the health and vitality of churches.

Churches begin to have problems, however, when conflict

*Doug Bixby is senior pastor of Evangelical Covenant Church in Attleboro, Massachusetts. This article is adapted from his book *Navigating the Nonsense: Church Conflict and Triangulation*, just published by Cascade. Used with permission of the publisher.*

takes a dominant role. Too much conflict leads congregations into stagnation and into a downward spiral. This is why we need to know how to navigate the challenges that come with conflict.

The most important way to navigate is not to make sure that we avoid conflict—this is futile—but to make sure that we are trying to avoid triangulation. Sometimes the conflict is about the color of carpeting, the size of a refrigerator, the type of stove needed in the church kitchen, the closing hymn for Sunday morning, or what the children's choir members should wear. Whatever the conflict (and often it seems like nonsense), the best way to keep the anxiety level low is to avoid triangles—talking about a third person without that person present. This effort is a required spiritual practice for clergy and church leaders.

Pastors stand in the gap between the way things are and the way things ought to be in congregations. It's up to us to teach and remind each other to talk to people instead of about them. Practicing this discipline helps us maximize missional productivity. When we're alert to the dangers of relating to each other in triangles, we can lead congregations toward higher levels of communication and productivity.

Jesus was a direct communicator. He consistently made his way out of the emotional triangles that other people tried to draw him into. He did this with his disciples and the people bringing children to him, and with the crowd wanting to stone a woman caught in adultery. He also avoided a serious emotional triangle in Luke 10:38–42:

Now as they went on their way, he [Jesus] entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Martha was complaining to Jesus about Mary's behavior, and invited Jesus into triangle: to move into the middle of the issues she had with Mary. Jesus said no to this by not responding to her question. (But he didn't hesitate to use the situation to reveal something significant about the difference between what the world values and what he values.)

Jesus did not want to be used by Martha as a pawn in her relationship with Mary. He did not want Martha to drag him into the conflict. The issues between the two women were something they would have to figure out on their own—he was not going to join them and worsen the conflict.

Until I read this and other passages, I had thought of direct communication and trying to avoid triangles as a practical strategy, but not as a biblical model. Then I started noticing how Jesus avoided walking into triangles. He spoke directly to

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people and had a knack for stepping away when others dragged him into their conflicts.

When I arrived in Massachusetts after 15 years in a previous congregation, I knew that I needed to adjust to new ways of doing things. And I knew that too much change would traumatize my congregation and even generate unhelpful backlash. A friend of mine likes to quote his grandmother: "No one likes change except a wet baby."

I know this, and yet I couldn't resist changing many things right away. Sure enough—it was too much change. People were uncomfortable, and soon a member went to see the associate pastor to complain. Ironically, this member had an adventurous spirit and a high level of energy—she was the last person I would have expected to be uncomfortable with change.

The associate pastor, Jay, and I had talked about avoiding triangles in staff meetings, and he was excited and ready to encourage direct communication instead of talking about a person not present. Jay saw the meeting with this person as an opportunity to encourage her to see me and share her feelings directly with me, and this is what he did. He took himself out of the middle.

So far, so good. But then he did something he shouldn't have done; he came to me and shared the story. He told me what she said to him in his office. He was trying to protect me—he was worried about the conflict and wanted to warn me about the conversation this person might initiate with me. But when he

did this—no matter his good intentions—he connected the dots and completed the triangle.

This created a significant amount of anxiety in me. I did not sleep well the next several nights, as I worried about what I would say to the woman. My anxiety was for nothing—she never came to see me. Apparently she just needed to let off some steam. After she talked with Jay, she was ready to move on.

When triangles pile up, so do the consequences. Without Jay's alert, the worst would have been that I would have had a difficult conversation with this woman. But I didn't need protection from a difficult conversation. As church leaders, we expect these conversations and we're trained for them. We know that we need to allow space for people to share feelings of frustration, anger, and fear about issues in the church or about changes taking place.

It's good for people to express these emotions, and sometimes this is all they need to do. Sometimes leaders help simply by listening. My colleague and I saw this experience of triangulating as a case study, and we learned from it. Our relationship became stronger as we continued talking about how to manage information and encourage direct communication, and we agreed that we would continue to resist the temptation to form emotional triangles.

We resonated with the words of family systems therapist Edwin Friedman, in *A Failure of Nerve*:

For leaders, the capacity to understand and think in terms of emotional triangles can be the key to their stress, their health, their effectiveness, and their relational binds. Almost every issue of leadership and the difficulties that accompany it can be framed in terms of emotional triangles, including motivation, clarity, decision making, resistance to change, imaginative gridlock, and a failure of nerve.

Jay stayed at our church for five more years, and his ministry produced many positive results. The chemistry between us was good, and our trust level was high. Avoiding triangles helped both of us develop relationally and vocationally.

The church always needs strong leaders who will help the church fulfill its mission in the community, the society, and the world. Those who've learned to share authority gracefully will see this happen, as will leaders who work to avoid creating or reinforcing triangles that isolate and antagonize others. Effective leadership requires a steady, love-filled watchfulness. We can build trust-filled relationships if we base them on the example Jesus set for us and nurture the foundation of trust that we've established with God.



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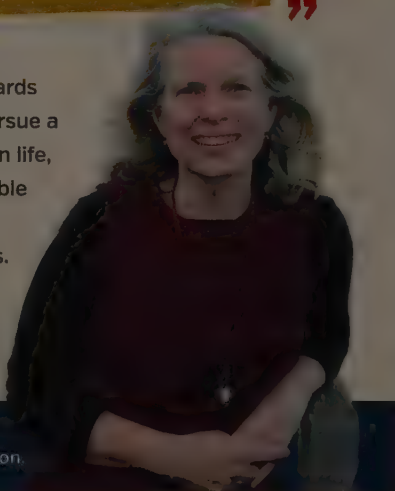
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How does it end?

by Benjamin J. Dueholm

AS WE FOUND our seats and the lights dimmed, my seven-year-old and I watched the world end five times. Not in a strictly final way—two such endings were part of sequels, and one seemed to bid fair to kick off a new series. We endured this gauntlet of heavy-looming spacecraft and cataclysmic mutant gods in order to see the new *Star Wars* film, which featured the destruction of five more planets (all accomplished in one mercifully brief go).

I was tempted to shield my son's eyes and my own, less from the trauma of the images than from the curious implications of dwelling so repetitively and at such grandly budgeted length on one story after another of The End.

Why is it so profitable to make these apocalyptic entertainments? Art has long been a way for a society to imagine its own end. The visions may be hopeful or despairing, admonitory or fatalistic. They may be apotropaic talismans, warding off our anxieties by letting us experience them in a limited form ("Today we are canceling the apocalypse," a character in *Pacific Rim* says). Or they may be cold anticipations, like Stanley Kubrick's brutally satirical *Dr. Strangelove*, in which the world ends to the soundtrack of "We'll Meet Again." But the sheer width and breadth of apocalyptic themes and images in popular culture is, if not unprecedented, at least startling. We seem to be telling ourselves something, if under obscure signs.

Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson survey a broad swath of apocalyptic pop culture in search of what, exactly, we are telling ourselves. Their itinerary takes us through prominent antihero dramas (*Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *House of Cards*), zombie stories (*The Walking Dead*, *World War Z*), science fiction (*Battlestar Galactica*, *Her*), and dystopian fictions of various kinds (*Game of Thrones*, *Scandal*, and *The Hunger Games*). They discern common and connected themes across works that at first glance share nothing more than a gnawing despair about the state of the world.

These are works, they argue, of secular apocalypse. As they are apocalyptic, they are connected to a literary tradition that is older than the Bible. As they are secular, they express the explicit norms and implicit contradictions of our secular age. "They're stories that have the distinct sense embedded in them that this social order can't last—that we are, in fact, near the end of something."

The ambitious and perhaps novel interpretation of these varied cultural products through the twin lenses of religious apocalypse and secularism requires the authors to orient us

How to Survive the Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics at the End of the World

By Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson
Eerdmans, 206 pp., \$16.00 paperback

quickly to a good deal of material that can't be found on the most discerning viewer's Netflix queue. An early chapter introduces in some detail philosopher Charles Taylor's theory of the secular age—that is, the age of the modern and postmodern West. The secular age is not an age without faith or religion, but rather an age in which having faith is radically optional, a choice among choices rather than the background assumption of a traditional or premodern culture.

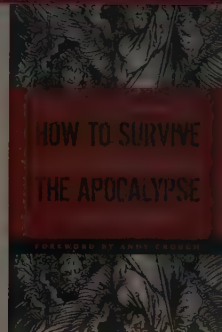
Far from being a mere subtraction of beliefs or practices, secularity (in Taylor's telling) is the creation of something new. Instead of being "porous selves" inhabiting collective identities and susceptible to good or bad spiritual influences, we have become "buffered selves," isolated from the world and each other and thrown back on our own pathless search for authenticity. Instead of exploring an expressive, meaning-rich cosmos, we now operate in an impersonal, intrinsically meaningless universe. Instrumental rationality is, for us, the measure of all things.

Taylor's massive work on this topic has shaped the thinking of a significant segment of the Christian intelligentsia. Some have been tempted to make of this thesis an apocalypse of its own, connecting it to every baneful fact of discourse or morality. Joustra and Wilkinson nod to this temptation before resisting it. The world is not, in fact, going straight to hell. The cultural developments of the secular age are not unequivocally bad or good. But they create their own dysfunctions, still quite young and easily undetected, which constitute "the malaise of modernity."

That malaise, it turns out, is what their book is about. The antiheroes are men cut loose from the horizons of meaning that in ages past both limited moral choices and gave them significance. Their search for authenticity, a key concept in the literature (and polemic) on the secular age, is driven by "a malformed understanding of how finding our identity works."

So Walter White, the cancer-stricken nebbish of *Breaking Bad*, turns himself by small steps from a schoolteacher into a ruthless self-made drug kingpin—first out of desperation, then

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increasingly out of pride. “I am the one who knocks,” he tells his wife, who clings naively to a more innocent version of Walter. This unmoored, freely chosen but nugatory self-assertion represents the “triumphant, arrogant march” of the secular antihero “toward what he conceives of as not his doom but his glory.”

Analogous themes come to the fore in the mild near-future dystopia of Spike Jonze’s 2013 feature *Her* or the abyssal fantasy world of *Game of Thrones*. The technological and political advance of autonomy brings with it a poverty of human connection. In the wealthy, decadent Capitol of *The Hunger Games*, the “iron cage” of modernity enables boundless hedonism while rendering systemic injustice invisible to its residents. When the ways that power legitimates itself are unmasked, as they are in *Game of Thrones*, what’s left are endless competing subjectivities. “We inhabit inescapable horizons,” Wilkinson and Joustra comment on the cynical realism of *Game*, “and our Secular self-delusions always have a clock on them. Tick, tock.”

In a secular age, apocalypse looms as a moral challenge and a historical reality.

Yet for all its erudite diagnosis, *How to Survive the Apocalypse* is not suffused with *Walking Dead* levels of doom. Modern apocalypse reveals and conceals at the same time. “Society moves in all directions,” Joustra and Wilkinson remind us—it moves toward new syntheses and forms of order as well as fresh expressions of chaos. In the redeeming choices, however few, that are available in postapocalyptic hellscapes, we can glimpse wisdom for our own “preapocalyptic” times, “an account of the self that is truly *apocalyptic*, that bears within it the revelation of who we are, what we’re for, and where we’re going.”

The book concludes with an intriguing analogy. “We need new Daniels,” the authors insist, referring to the Old Testament prophet who rose to prominence in Nebuchadnezzar’s court with a daring combination of principle and flexibility. Daniel is “the patron saint of the apocalypse,” a model for Christians (or really anyone with a worldview not wholly conformed to the postulates of the secular age) who want to live in and serve a fragile, fraying world while proposing and defending bigger, better ideas of what it means to be human.

This clear-eyed but cautiously hopeful conclusion comes as a bit of a surprise after the book’s many tours through imagined ends of the age. Joustra and Wilkinson’s apocalyptic politics rest on the assumption that democratic societies suffer primarily from a deterioration of public virtue (in the broadest, least moralistic sense). If we could check and perhaps correct this deterioration by building and serving “faithful institutions” within the secular age, we could allow for greater human flourishing. The apocalypse is, it seems, primarily within. It is cultural and psychological, not historical and natural. One can only hope that this theory is right.

But what if it’s not? What if modern, secular, democratic


societies need something more drastic than a cultural renovation from within? It may be that the horizon that both enables and limits our culture is narrower and harder than that of medieval Europe or ancient Babylon. The environmental, economic, and even technological imbalances of our society—and the institutional crises issuing from them—may run far deeper than even Charles Taylor’s theories suggest.

The writers of television shows seem to suspect this. *Breaking Bad* may be a classic secular age tragedy, but it is equally a tale of the Great Recession. *House of Cards* chronicles a power-hungry man’s battle with the intrinsic meaninglessness of self-fashioning, but it also holds a funhouse mirror up to a period of chronic institutional failure. *The Hunger Games* critiques hedonism, but it also extrapolates from our present age of hyper-inequality. And it doesn’t take much squinting to see an ecological subtext to the modern zombie apocalypse. Secular apocalypse is a guide to causes, not just symptoms.

To describe our own time as preapocalyptic, for instance, requires the exclusion of considerable evidence from outside the cultural boundaries of the developed, democratic West. The frightening dynamics of the 2013 government shutdown in the United States look considerably worse as they play out in Brazil, and downright terrifying in places where state failure is advanced, sometimes with the help of U.S. policies—places like Syria and El Salvador, whose refugees from the end of their world are pleading for entrance into ours. The relative preponderance of fear over generosity in our response is a strong indication of how we will react when the dislocations start closer to home.

The ironies and reversals that history holds for the great and powerful are a subject of apocalypse, too. In his short apocalyptic novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), South African author J. M. Coetzee imagines an unnamed empire that, like any empire, “dooms itself to live in history and plot against history,” ruthlessly and vigorously seeking to delay its destruction—the sooner or later toppling of “the globe surmounted by the tiger rampant that symbolizes eternal dominion.”

Such plotting is costly. Whole civilizations were brought to nothing to make room for ours. Our civilization undertook this grim task without any help from the malaise of late modernity. If anything, that malaise has been deepened by the growing knowledge of what we have been, and still are, quite capable of, in all the antiheroic brilliance of our reigning ideologies. We live toward the precipice of our world, but only just behind us are the other worlds we’ve ended to get here. Perhaps when the lights are lowered, we are indulging in the most deeply submerged and horrid thrill of all—the thrill of watching chickens come home to roost.

The astonishing, quiet apocalypse of the 2015 film *Ex Machina* illustrates this thrill perfectly. In a utopia built by immense wealth and rendered smooth by technology, folly and hubris, two great poles of human nature, conspire to unleash a world-ending version of artificial intelligence. The ending, the evolutionary abolition of humanity in which humans are both the driver and the mere instrument, is predetermined. Only the timing is unknown. At its glorious height a world discovers, too late and by surprise, precisely what it can’t control. For centuries, a whole civilization can be the one who knocks. But sooner or later everyone has to open the door. 

Faith MATTERS

by Samuel Wells

Seven possibilities for church

ALL PASTORS WANT their churches to be signs of hope—to embody configurations of trust too seldom found elsewhere. Yet in many communities people set out in hope but end up disappointed, dejected, and even cynical. Pastors spend a lot of time tending people's difficult experiences and confounding people's stereotypes of what hope can mean. Here are seven projections and assumptions that I face in my current context and responses that reflect what the church I serve is called to be.

First, it's possible to be a church without being defensive and closed-minded. Jesus came that we might have life in all its glory. God made each of us as we are because God wanted one like us. God made us with minds and bodies, not just with wills and souls. God wants us to live before death as well as after. The Holy Spirit works as much beyond the church as within it. We're called to be what only we can be but to want what everyone else can have as well.

Second, it's possible to care for those who are ostracized or in trouble in a way that enhances rather than diminishes the community. There's no true community without the enrichment and challenge that come from people whose face or migrant status or identity doesn't fit. That's because care comes not out of some self-important altruism but out of recognizing our own need and desiring to be transformed by the strangers God sends us. With them we acknowledge that each of us is a stranger too.

Third, it's possible to be aspirational, financially sustainable, and participatory all at the same time. Many creative initiatives come to grief because they focus on one of these and overlook the others. Beauty and brilliance are great, as are fun and friendship, and having enough money to do it again next year.

Fourth, it's possible to have commercial activities and administrative practices that deepen and embody our understanding of the kingdom rather than conflict with or confuse it. By serving people and creating a staff team, a church learns what love and justice and flourishing mean when translated into economic decisions and regular habits of trade and employment. If a church wants to pay good wages, it has to make sacrifices elsewhere. If it wants to sell fair trade lines of goods, it has to ensure they're attractive. If it wants to give disadvantaged people a step up the employment ladder, it needs to give them appropriate support. It's difficult to get these things right, but a church that does is discovering a pearl of great price.

Fifth, it's possible to grow without becoming impersonal, two-dimensional, or an ogre. No one wants to lose the joys of interactive community. Everyone knows what it feels like for something spontaneous and good to become big or formulaic and lose its character. *Partnership* names the ways an organization can share its practice and extend its influence while respecting and affirming its differences from other institutions and without building an empire. It's possible to promote the things you believe in while cherishing what's unique about your own context.

Sixth, we can do unbelievable things together if we start with one another's assets rather than deficits. In a community of fear we begin with our hurts and our stereotypes and find a hundred reasons why we can't do things or why certain kinds of people don't belong. But if we peel off labels like disabled or wealthy or migrant or evangelical or single, and instead see qualities like passionate or committed or generous or enthusiastic or humble, then there's no limit to what a community of hope can do. God gives us everything we need to fulfill our vocation. If we experience our life as scarcity, and yet don't receive and enjoy the gifts God gives us, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Seventh, it's possible to believe that in Christ the future is bigger than the past. So much of the church in England and the United States is limping sadly, like a puppy with a sore paw. Social and political discourse in both countries is inflamed with a rhetoric of nostalgia for some ill-defined era of pure nationhood and cultural supremacy. Christianity is founded on two convictions: the forgiveness of sins, which maintains the past can be healed by the Holy Spirit, and everlasting life, which claims our future with Christ has no end. Congregations love to tell stories of good things and noble deeds that have happened in their midst. But the best and most prophetic thing about the church I serve is that it believes the future is bigger than the past. That's what makes it an energized and inspiring community. We don't know, but we're learning. We haven't arrived, but the journey's great. We're not sure exactly where we're going, but it's getting better all the time. We've had wonderful experiences, but the best is yet to come.

Like the Carpenters' 1970 hit, "we've only just begun." Our church communities have many blessings, a great deal to enjoy and be proud of, and a lot to learn. This church thing is only 2,000 years old. It's early days.

Samuel Wells is the vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

IN Review

Light's remaining mysteries

by Tony Jones

On August 19, 1839, when Louis-Jacque-Mandé Daguerre revealed that he had invented a way to capture light and imprint its image from a camera obscura onto a plate, the massive crowd at the Institut de France in Paris was astounded. They'd heard rumors of Daguerre's images for years, but many doubted such a thing was possible.

Some people thought the invention was sinful. "The wish to capture evanescent reflections is not only impossible," a German newspaper bellowed, "but the mere desire is blasphemy. God created man in His own image, and no man-made machine may fix the image of God." Artists were also flummoxed, one decrying, "From today, painting is dead." All because of a proto-photograph. Now, 300 million photos are uploaded to Facebook every day. It's estimated that 1 trillion photos were taken in 2015. That's a lot of blasphemy.

Light has often provoked such overwrought reactions, as Bruce Watson masterfully shows. Beyond a mere history of light, this book is also an intellectual history of Western culture. It would be difficult to find another subject so intertwined with so many disciplines: philosophy, theology, poetry, visual art, astronomy, and physics. The thinkers who've pondered and theorized and painted and sung about light comprise a veritable who's who of Western intellectualism: Aristotle, Aquinas, and Dante, Galileo, Haydn, and Monet, Newton, Edison, and Einstein.

Watson doesn't exactly breeze through four millennia, but he avoids getting bogged down in any one period, discovery, or person. Yet there is a distinctive turning point. The book pivots at the year 1800. In part one, the primary hero is Newton. In part two, it's Einstein. In part one, light is mysterious, religious,

and divine. In part two, it's science, hard science.

Light has long vexed humans. The Hebrew Bible's "let there be light" is echoed in many ancient sacred texts. Mani's third-century hybrid of the teachings of Jesus, Zoroaster, and Buddha resulted in what he called a "religion of light." Mani's most famous follower-turned-critic, Augustine, argued that humans cannot become light but can only reflect light, for light comes only from God.

The earliest philosophical and theological debates about light followed similar lines of argument. Philosophers debated: Does light come from an object into the eye or does light emanate from the eye and illuminate an object? Theologians debated: Is God light or does God reflect light? Over the centuries, the questions changed: Is light a thing or a quality? Is light a particle or a wave?

But the real question about light for those of us who preach and teach the Christian scriptures is this: Is light in any way still mysterious? We proclaim an ancient text that was composed when light most definitely was mysterious. God not only created the light, God led the Israelites through the wilderness as a pillar of light. Jesus is the light of the world, and Paul assured us, "You are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness."

But nowadays, what's the difference? With two taps, my mobile phone turns into a flashlight and dispels the darkness. Light pollution masks the stars. A full 20 percent of all electricity generated is used to power lights. And the invention of the LED promises to bring more artificial light to the world and further drown out the stars, since it emits a blue light which scatters more widely than yellow light. Astronomers are worried.

A RADIANT HISTORY from
CREATION to the QUANTUM AGE



LIGHT

BRUCE WATSON

Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age

By Bruce Watson

Bloomsbury, 304 pp., \$27.00

Watson tries valiantly to convince us that light is still mystical, still divine. From Stonehenge at the solstice to the Ganges at the Dev Deepawali festival, he reports on the throngs of people who await first light. Christians have our own versions: the Advent wreath, lit to fight back the darkness of December; and the Pascal candle, lighted from a fire in the courtyard to celebrate the lengthening days and the light from the empty tomb.

Are these traditions just religious nostalgia? Darkness simply does not carry the uncertainty and fear that it once did, now that light is abundant. Therefore, neither is light the potent symbol of the divine. To the exclamation, "Jesus is the light of the world!" a 21st-century teenager might reply, "Meh."

Maybe this is why Watson's book is so important, why it can be such a boon to preachers and teachers: he reminds us just how magical and mysterious light really is. Galileo, Newton, and Einstein all went to their graves frustrated that they had not figured out light. Yes, we're surrounded by ubiquitous light, but its mysteries have not been wholly conquered. Astronomers keep looking outward, hoping to see beyond the stars to the first light of the universe. And physicists hope to use lasers to generate a clean and limitless source of energy.

Maybe science is the new cathedral and scientists our priests. If so, light is still divine.

Tony Jones is the author of Did God Kill Jesus? and senior fellow at the Science for Youth Ministry project at Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

Pope Francis among the Wolves: The Inside Story of a Revolution

By Marco Politi;

translated by William McCuaig

Columbia University Press, 288 pp., \$27.95

Catholic progressives love to read Marco Politi. Four years ago he published a book about Pope Benedict XVI in Italian. The narrative became a familiar one: Benedict was a theologian first and a leader second. Politi wrote speculatively about the 2005 conclave that elected Cardinal Ratzinger, and in this book he speculates about the conclave that elected Ratzinger's replacement. His account is more revealing than anything yet published in book form about what happened among the cardinals in the Sistine Chapel on those days in March 2013.

Politi is a journalist of the highest standing in Rome. His sources are usually interviews, which are impossible to check. This book is the result of access. I counted a half dozen cardinals from the 2013 conclave that Politi quotes as unnamed sources. One says, "At the moment of the decisive vote, we felt joy. The rapidity gave us a sense of relief." Others he quotes by name: "In the conclave I felt like a pen in the hand of God" (Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò).

Politi offers Benedict XVI a backhanded compliment: the emeritus pope's resignation made possible a golden Catholic moment. In a Politi's estimation, Benedict XVI is a "tragic figure" who saw problems, wasn't capable of facing them, and was willing to take the fall, hoping that the one who replaced him could do what he could not.

There have been popes who clearly didn't want the job. John Paul I said in 1978 to those who elected him, "May God forgive you." He died mysteriously 33 days later. There was also the medieval hermit who tried to flee when the cardinals climbed his mountain to tell him that they'd elected him (he became Celestine V and would quit a

few months later). And there was Benedict XVI, who served willingly, then quit, leaving the vacuum filled by today's Pope Francis.

Politi makes a mistake when he argues for Benedict's tragic, antiheroic status. His argument rests in part on the mistaken notion that Benedict was the first and only pope to willingly step down. Still, I would love to believe that Politi's understanding of the matter reflects the resigning pope's intentions:

Benedict XVI wanted to sweep the board clear of all the entrenched positions of power in the curia. By resigning, he triggered the automatic resignation, as stipulated by canon law, of the other principle office holders of the church's central government. De facto, his decision to abdicate amounted to a sort of coup d'état, a virtual "reboot" of the Vatican.

When he writes about Jorge Mario Bergoglio before he became Pope Francis, Politi tells a now-familiar story. In Buenos Aires, the archbishop's priests called him Jorge. He didn't have a car and driver. He refused to live in the upscale, protected residence reserved for his position. On the bus or the subway it was "not unknown for a woman seated beside him, upon seeing his black habit, to ask him: 'Padrecito, will you hear my confession?' and to receive the answer: 'Yes, of course.' Once on a bus he finally had to interrupt a man whose catalog of sins was interminable with the polite remark, 'Bueno, I get off two stops from here.'"

Bergoglio knew "every one of the eight hundred priests in his diocese. From the time he took charge of the archbishopric, he aimed to reinforce the presence of priests in the outlying shantytowns." This is the sort of man we have wanted to have as pope, and now we do. But not everyone is thrilled.

Politi emphasizes that Bergoglio had no fear whatsoever in the slums, among drug lords, or in the presence of extreme poverty. Before leaving for the 2013 conclave, Bergoglio reportedly told a lawyer friend, another of Politi's anonymous sources: "If I were elected, I'd know what to do." Politi proceeds to tell us that when Bergoglio faced the prospect



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Reviewed by Jon M. Sweeney, author of *The Pope Who Quit, about Celestine V, and When Saint Francis Saved the Church.*

of leading the worldwide church, surrounded by the Curia, bankers, soldiers, corruption, and numerous problems, initially he was afraid. But then that fear went away, almost as quickly. Politi recounts (as only an insider could—he is inside Bergoglio's head, it seems!) how the pope knelt to pray just before addressing the faithful in St. Peter's Square for the first time. Then "he stood up, and he was a different man from that

moment on." The source this time was a monsignor who was there, working for Vatican television.

This all sets the stage for Pope Francis's task: to rebuild, restyle, and reform the 1.1 billion-strong Catholic Church. He began mightily but has struggled with the same "tangle of crows and vipers" that have plagued every modern papacy. "I'm cunning," Pope Francis has said to his adversaries, according to Politi, and his goal is

"the missionary transformation of the church." This includes reforming his own office, dismantling centralization, and putting a stop to most theological denunciations. In all of this he has enemies. Politi's chapter 13, "The Enemies of Francis," makes for most interesting reading.

The cardinals knew what they were getting in Bergoglio; the Roman Curia (including the lawyers and the bankers) also knew; even the Italian mafia knew. Individuals within all three contingents are now desperately wanting this papacy to come to an end. They "act and speak behind the scenes." And then there are the media figures who support the pope's enemies—for example, those who are publicly battling his denunciations of the "invisible tyranny" of financial speculation.

Politi assigns a few other chapters to hot-button issues in the Catholic Church without hiding his own opinions. On the problem of women's ordination he writes, "To face up fully to the role of women in the church constitutes a ford in the stream that the Bergoglio pontificate must cross." He also summarizes Bergoglio's leadership of the Jesuits in Argentina and Paraguay with aplomb.

On the first page of the book Politi writes: "According to legend, Saint Francis of Assisi once met a wolf, to which he addressed a mild sermon. Won over by the saint's words, the fierce animal grew gentle and submissive, lowered its head, and followed him. The adversaries of Pope Francis, however, are not so quick to yield." By the end the volume this is abundantly clear.



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American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered the World of Islam

By Christine Leigh Heyman
Hill & Wang, 352 pp., \$30.00

As rhetorical attacks against Muslims at home are combined with military assaults abroad, Americans would do well to ask ourselves why we believe what we do about Islam. The invention of Islam in the minds of Americans is not a 21st-century innovation: it grows from a long

history of encounters between Christians and Muslims. Christine Leigh Heyrman elaborates one such encounter, which began 200 years ago.

In the early 1800s, evangelical zeal pulled a mix of devout Protestant missionaries to the Middle East. The confluence of a spacious piety and personal ambitions propelled these American seekers to strange lands, where spiritual adventures were entered into diaries, repackaged into reports from the evangelical front lines, and enthusiastically consumed by the American public. These narratives shaped perceptions of the Middle East and its inhabitants, establishing attitudes that would inform policies abroad and biases at home. The legacy of these narratives remains with us today, shaping our constructions of faith and politics across cultures.

Heyrman, who teaches American history at the University of Delaware, tells of Protestant evangelicals instituting missionary societies to convert heathens and heretics in distant corners of the world. The Middle East held particular prominence in the Christian imagination as the site where past and future converged. This region was heralded as both the ancestral birthplace of the church and the place where the world's denouement would unfold at God's appointed time.

Pliny Fisk, Levi Parsons, and Jonas King are no longer household names. Yet these individuals were primary actors in the American encounter with Islam, and later with the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities of the Levant. These missionaries presented themselves as champions of a gospel proclamation shorn of superstitions and undemocratic hierarchies. They traveled extensively, publishing and disseminating pamphlets. They went to extraordinary lengths to master the languages and traditions of indigenous populations. They engaged in theological conversations, as well as occasional disputations, with their hosts. They recorded their exploits in terms that would garner ongoing financial support from American and British benefactors, all the while

delivering portraits of "the other" that enthralled audiences back home.

According to Heyrman, prominent evangelical missionaries conjured a vision of heroism that served a critical purpose in 19th-century American Protestantism. Christianity, and particularly evangelical Protestantism, was often judged as lacking in virility and dominated by women. Requirements to turn the other cheek and practice radical generosity did not mesh with the expansionist ambitions of a fledgling nation divinely endowed with a sacred vocation.

The missionary movement generated a manly image of the heroic martyr, the daring adventurer, and the fearless leader. As the ethos of "muscular Christianity" gained greater currency, the American apostle who traversed oceans and deserts emerged as the Protestant version of a saint. To lionize the missionary's courage, Muslims were cast as implacable adversaries and served as the quintessential foil.

Protestant missionaries did not achieve the success that was anticipated in con-

verting Muslims. The Ottoman Empire regarded conversion to Christianity as an act of apostasy, and the move entailed serious risks. More significantly, Protestant encounters with Muslim jurists did not generate public curiosity or inspire intellectual and spiritual inquiries. As a consequence, evangelical outreach shifted its focus toward Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Evangelical missionaries sought to uproot indigenous Christians from their ancestral traditions and practices, unleashing polemical assaults that branded Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians as idolatrous and benighted. Anti-Catholic diatribes invoked caricatures going back to the 16th century. Not only did these tactics inflame ecumenical relations in the Middle East, they also kindled animosity among Americans who read the dispatches from overseas and found their anti-Catholic biases fortified. This antipathy was magnified as Roman Catholic immigration to the United States swelled in the 19th century.

When it comes to religion, "choose one" is no longer your only option.



ISBN 9780827203020

You can be spiritual-but-not-religious—or not particularly religious at all—yet still have a robust system of beliefs and values that guides you. If faithfully attending church isn't helping you live out your values in everyday ways, becoming *relig-ish* may be the answer!



Reviewed by Christopher M. Leighton, who is executive director of the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies in Baltimore.

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Heyrman balances her account by contrasting the more accommodating approach of Parsons and Fisk with the pugnacious accounts penned by King. Parsons and Fisk went to considerable lengths to understand their hosts and discovered ethical and spiritual affinities with their so-called opponents. King showered contempt on all who did not share his dogmatic allegiances. Lamentably, it was King's legacy that triumphed.

His stature in and beyond evangelical quarters enabled him to influence American attitudes toward the Middle East, and, perhaps more ominously, his career "exemplified how evangelicals' support for missions and their hatred of Catholicism came to feed off each other's intensity." As Heyrman notes,

It was no coincidence that zeal for foreign missions and opposition to

Catholics gathered momentum during the nineteenth century. Twinned dynamos, together they came to define evangelical identity, instilling unity in a movement fractured by denominational differences, slavery, race, and class and temporarily ruptured by the Civil War and Reconstruction.

While evangelical efforts to conquer the Middle East fell far short of expectations, "the debacle abroad brought on campaigns to purge the homeland of perceived religious impurity and dissent." Adversarial views of Roman Catholicism in the Middle East set the stage for the violent outbursts against Catholics that erupted in the 1830s in cities such as Boston and Philadelphia. Furthermore, the antipathy toward Islam that hardened in the wake of the earliest evangelical expeditions became a fixture within conservative Christian quarters, generating notions of an apocalyptic battle in which the West is pitted against Islam.

Heyrman's account propels us to ask: Where are our fears and suspicions about Islam grounded? To what extent have the failures to impose our own political and economic will on distant people poisoned American attitudes and behaviors toward Muslim neighbors and blinded the public to the humanitarian plight of refugees? Heyrman reminds us yet again that domestic and international policies are entangled in the messy business of interreligious relations.

Instead of Sadness: Poems

By Catherine Abbey Hodges

Gunpowder Press, 78 pp., \$15.00 paperback

Most of us have been hijacked by loss or waylaid by grief at some point or another. We have lost someone we love. We have needed to give up some dream. We have failed at some goal. In our relentlessly active, entertainment-driven American society, we often shoulder our grief alone.

In her first collection of poetry, Catherine Abbey Hodges makes it clear that she too knows the deep ache of loss.

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Scharen

CHRISTIAN WHAT IT IS PRACTICAL WHY IT MATTERS WISDOM

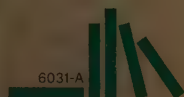
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Like William Blake in his *Songs of Experience*, Hodges could say plenty about the adult world of repression and defeat. Instead, she pits against grief such a sensible beauty that the book finally releases her—and, as we read, us—from the grip of sorrow. Hodges's poetry bears witness to the possibility of joy after despair.

In "Everything Important" she tells us: "Friends up and leave / their sturdy bodies. The stonechat takes flight. / A son learns to whistle. A daughter finds / the greatest common factor, then falls / in love. One morning the leaves / are off the elm and halfway down the block." There is nothing she, or any of us, can do to stop our dearest people and things from fading, dying, moving on, leaving us. She—and we, her readers—stand waving goodbye, stunned, grief-stricken. And yet, when Hodges turns, she glimpses "the secret alley of camellias" bathed in an "impossible . . . brightness."

Another poem, "January Song," takes place after Christmas, when Hodges feels abandoned to primal darkness. "The holidays are over. Now we're here / amidst the candle stubs and bits of ribbon," she writes. The kids have packed their gear and driven away. As she and her husband wave to them from the porch, she realizes that "Time's origami has its way with fear, / with loss, bright things gone dark and plans gone riven." The form of this poem is a villanelle, which repeats whole lines. It dwells pensively on loss. Yet by the end she reports, "our failures folded into something dear / and strange and new." In fact, she can claim, "These early afterhours are their own heaven."

What might make an anguished reader believe Hodges's claim that healing and even joy are possible? I found myself believing her because of the poems' stripped-down diction and straightforward images. The reversals in this book aren't easy. There is nothing sentimental or giddy about them. They are real. They are ordinary.

Hodges's poems locate grace in the simplest things. In "Turned Sparrow" Hodges tells us that when she sees smoke tear "from stacks like rags" she remembers her own birth: "me torn clear like a leaf / turned sparrow in a hard wind."

Here she identifies with the familiar—an autumn leaf in a fierce gale, and a sparrow, a bird no bigger than a child's fist and utterly common.

Poets have long compared themselves to birds, those simple mysterious creatures who hover between heaven and earth. The great English Romantic John Keats likened himself to a nightingale, a pure, idealized voice singing alone in darkness. In contrast, Hodges is an ordinary sparrow. She has experienced the effort and terror of struggling to make headway against a hard wind. She testifies at the end of the poem that it takes work and steady nerves to find something "instead of sadness," but sometimes the light comes. Then, in a flash, we see that light as a gift of grace.

Her short poem "Polaris" links the North Star, the brightest star of Ursa Minor, with a nasturtium leaf. At their intersection, "here the heavens / pivot." Here again, Hodges finds beauty in the ordinary. Nasturtiums are humble flowers (unlike lilies, with their history of religious symbolism, or roses, which have long represented love). Nasturtiums are widely available and easy to grow: they cheerfully spread. They are edible; they are practical. And yet, in Hodges's poetry, each leaf of this common, useful little flower bears the mark of the most dazzling star of the heavens. The ordinary is suffused with grace.

After reading Hodges's poems I find myself paying attention to the crazy angles of a sycamore's bare limbs, marveling at its paint-by-number bark. I noticed this morning how the green heads of daffodil leaves are nudging aside last year's brown rubble in the flower bed by the driveway. As Hodges tells us in "Stems," frequently our tired spirits and exhausted questions are transformed by the most modest things around us. The earth is always "delivering answers / that look for all the world / like cornflowers."

If I forget that, and I'm pretty sure I will, I plan to go back and reread this redemptive book.

Reviewed by Jeanne Murray Walker, who teaches at the University of Delaware. Her most recent book is Helping the Morning: New and Selected Poems.

BookMarks

War No More: Three Centuries of American Antiwar and Peace Writing

Edited by Lawrence Rosenwald
Library of America, 850 pp., \$40.00

This comprehensive collection, spanning 300 years and 150 authors, includes excerpts from political writers such as Martin Luther King Jr., Daniel Berrigan, Dorothy Day, Shirley Chisholm, and Barack Obama, but also a surprising array of artistic voices: Mark Twain, Joan Baez, Denise Levertov, and Bill Watterson. "How come we play war and not peace?" the cartoon tiger Hobbes asks, to which Calvin replies: "Too few role models." Warner Mifflin's 1796 call "to raise the pure Standard of the Prince of Peace, above all party rage, strife, contention, rents and divisions, in the spirit of meekness and wisdom" chastens Americans today. Yet there is hope. As Bayard Rustin says, "It is always timely and virtuous to change—to take in all humility a new path."

Grief Is the Thing with Feathers

By Max Porter
Graywolf, 128 pp., \$14.00 paperback

Max Porter's debut novel, which hovers between poetry and prose, illustrates the ways in which grief can be simultaneously violent and gentle. A London father and his two young sons reel from the accidental death of the family's mother, staggering through the subsequent years with vulnerability and grace. Alongside them is Crow, an unwelcome, oppressive, feathered guest who claims he has come to help the family grieve. Meanwhile, the father's academic work focuses on the fictional Crow of Ted Hughes's poetry after the death of his wife, Sylvia Plath. The Crow who animates these pages is both crude and eloquent—he functions as torturer, therapist, and healer. "In other versions," he caws, "I am a doctor or a ghost." Whoever he is, Crow embodies accompaniment—and points toward redemption.

The devil's beauty

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the epicurean elder brother Dmitri tells the chaste younger brother Alyosha that beauty is not simply God's creation. Sodom, he says, was full of beauty when it was destroyed, but its beauty did not save it. Dmitri says, "Did you know that secret? The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious and terrible. God and devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."

Like Dmitri, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe knew that the beautiful is a battleground, and he was happy to play on the devil's side. The lasting gift of his work was his ability to tease out the danger in the beautiful.

The J. Paul Getty Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art are sponsoring a joint retrospective of Mapplethorpe's work—*Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium*. The exhibits coincide with *Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures*, an HBO documentary that premiered on television on April 4.

Mapplethorpe's work is intimidating and requires a host of conflicting adjectives to describe it: beautiful, grotesque, libidinous, chaste, excessive, erotic, taboo, soft, hard, intimate, graphic, shocking, and revealing. His subjects range from still lifes of flowers to glamour shots of celebrities to the notorious *X Portfolio* which led then senator Jesse Helms to reprimand government arts agencies for sponsoring explicit gay erotica.

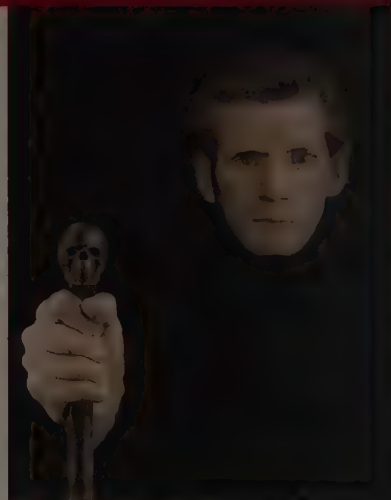
In one self-portrait taken while dying of AIDS, Mapplethorpe's head floats on a black background, emerging (or retreating) from the shadows where the

artist felt most comfortable. In the foreground he holds tightly to a cane. Instead of looking virile and erotic as in earlier self-portraits, he looks feeble and tired.

The photograph stokes our empathy for his fading life, but the figure in the photograph is still dangerous. One can't be sure what he has planned with this cane. Is it a weapon or a toy or a crutch? Is it a blind man's stick ready to orient him in the coming dark? Mapplethorpe's granite features and wide eyes challenge the viewer and imprint themselves on the retina so that when the viewer closes his eyes, Mapplethorpe is still staring back. The composition is beautiful but also sinister. Mapplethorpe is tempting the viewer to follow him into the shadows and see what he sees.

In an exchange with friend and lover Jack Fritscher, Mapplethorpe wrote, "I want to see the devil in us all, that is my real turn on." He realized that the battleground of God and the devil has always been a fertile place for an artist. It makes sense that he chose the devil as his companion, given the fact that he was denounced as demonic by Helms and others who claimed to speak for God.

Mapplethorpe frequently invoked the iconography of the devil, using such items as horns, tails, whips, and chains. His Catholic upbringing is noticeable in subtle references to medieval depictions of the devil. Yet his work does not incite fear of the demonic or frighten people toward devotion. Instead, it's a testament to *felix culpa*, when excommunication from the people of God becomes a moment of creative liberation.



SELF-PORTRAIT: Mapplethorpe challenges the viewer to see what he sees.

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton recognized that the true danger of the devil is his beauty. For Milton, fear and loathing of the devil was inextricably intertwined with a deep attraction. The church too sees danger in beauty—its relationship with the beautiful has always been flecked with the fear that beauty is seductive and can lead to unbridled lust.

Yet in the Hebrew scriptures, Satan shows up as part of God's own heavenly court. In the book of Job, *hassatan*, or the adversary, expresses God's doubt in the faithfulness of humanity and is sent to scrutinize human beings and expose their most private desires and devotions.

Mapplethorpe's most provocative photographs expose how closely aligned are desire, devotion, and disgust. The photographs are meant to be adversarial—they question how art that's dismissed as disgusting and demonic stokes desire. They expose the ways we hide our attraction to the devilish (even from ourselves), how attraction reflects our true desires, and how desires fund devotion. This is, after all, the role of *hassatan*, the adversary who tempts us into spaces where we might see the true shape of our devotion.

The author is Adam Hearlson, who teaches preaching and worship at Andover Newton Theological School and cohosts the podcast Technicolor Jesus.

by Carol Howard Merritt

CHURCH in the MAKING

Varieties of new churches

I attend a new church in a part of town that some consider bad. I find it lovely, with sprawling 1920s bungalows that were built back when a middle-class family could buy an Arts and Crafts kit house from Sears. The neighborhood has experienced the waning and waxing of generations of racism and gentrification. When people of color moved into the homes, white people moved out to the suburbs. When the neighborhood diversified, economic development slowed because the city neglected to offer perks for businesses and investment for schools. This lack of attention also meant that the neighborhood avoided teardowns and new construction. Now, as these vintage homes turn antique, younger residents who appreciate the ancient oak floors, noise-proof plaster walls, and ethnic diversity are moving in.

Our local presbytery thought the area would be a good place for a new worshiping community, so it hired an evangelist to start one. Across the street, an evangelical church erected a giant facility as a satellite for its multisite congregation. The modern, metal slopes of the building contrast sharply with the historic homes, especially at night, when blue and purple lights illuminate it.

The lead pastor doesn't visit the church often. Instead, the congregation projects a live video image of him preaching. When he does visit the neighborhood, a security company made up of off-duty sheriffs blocks the road with traffic

cones, and the pastor drives up in a Cadillac SUV. The church locks a giant steel fence in order to keep the facility safe. People flock to the church.

The two churches are a contrast in style, substance, and mission. We both love Jesus and long to love our neighbors, but that love has taken distinct shapes. Our ancient, formerly Methodist church structure is filled with people from the neighborhood. They gather in repurposed Sunday school rooms at all times of the day and night in order to take care of elderly residents, provide after-school programs for teens, run a free store, create art in studio spaces, and learn English as a second language. Each weeknight we eat with neighbors during hospitality hours, and in the summer we help host a Latin festival in the parking lot.

The two churches remind me of the variety of ways that a congregation can begin. In the last decade, evangelicals have specialized in multisite churches, where one congregation starts a sort of franchise, duplicating its worship experience at another site with the use of technology. (Some denominational churches also use this model when a pastor serves more than one traditional parish in a rural area.) The advantage of this model is that the new church often has a substantial core group and more investment of time, talent, and money.

Each congregation has a

start-up narrative that can be as different as our human birth stories, but we also have commonalities. The Ecumenical Partners in Outreach surveyed 260 ministries that have started since 2006 and found that they were initiated by a group of laypeople (33 percent), a denominational body (33 percent), an individual pastor (22 percent), or a congregation (17 percent). The starting point often depended on the denomination.

A denominational body began half of the new churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (49 percent) and the Reformed Church in America (50 percent), and the United Church of Canada's denominational bodies began 42 percent of their new worshiping communities. When a denomination begins a new church, it has the strength of connecting to a larger mission and vision and can tap into the legacies of closed churches, allowing the faith to take new form and shape in a new generation.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) had the most congregations initiated by an existing church (30 percent), but it was least likely to have a church started by an individual (2 percent). In the Disciples of Christ, individual pastors began a majority of new congregations (62 percent) while a group of lay leaders began 38 percent of congregations.

Most congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America were started by the denomination (31 percent) or a group of laypeople (31 percent). But one church started 20 percent of the churches. The United Church of Christ starts new communities with the denomination (24 percent), a group of laity (26 percent), pastors (38 percent), or another congregation (12 percent).

Is it good to have all of these ways of starting churches, empowering as many people as possible to begin them? What makes the Disciples so effective at training innovative pastors? Could we replicate programs like Bethany Fellows, which helps young ministers transition from seminary? Does a denomination's polity encourage or discourage new church starts? Does a church's bureaucracy make it difficult to welcome immigrant congregations? Why do groups of laity find it easier to organize congregations in some denominations as opposed to others?

Given the church's abundance of resources and creativity, we know that new communities can start in different ways and serve different people. Whether participants gather in a modern building to watch a pastor on a screen or eat a meal with their pastor every day, they are living and expressing the love of God and neighbor.

Carol Howard Merritt is author of *Tribal Church and Cohost of God Complex Radio*. Her blog is hosted by the *CENTURY*.

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PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF—Derry Presbyterian Church, a 1,000+ member congregation in Hershey, PA, is seeking a pastor/head of staff. The Derry congregation is deeply committed to mission outside our walls, from our recently completed Mission House across the street from the sanctuary to our annual weeklong trips to Nicaragua to build houses. Our recently retired pastor served us for 25 years, and we are seeking a spiritual leader who can help Derry discern what challenges God has in store for us in the next 25. Hershey is located among the rolling farm fields and woods of central Pennsylvania. A town of some 25,000 inhabitants, Hershey is home to the corporate headquarters of the Hershey Company and the Penn State Hershey Medical Center. We are within a three-hour drive or less to New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. Interested pastors with ten years of experience and the skills to lead an active, engaged congregation may send their PIFs to DerryPNC@gmail.com. For more about Derry, see our MIF or go to DerryPNC.org and www.DerryPres.org.



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Marsh Chapel at Boston University is pleased to present the 10th Annual Summer Preaching Series, entitled "A Lukan Horizon"



Our Guest Preachers this year for the Sunday 11:00 a.m. Interdenominational Services are:



Sunday, July 3

Br. Lawrence A. Whitney, LC+
University Chaplain for Community Life
Boston University



Sunday, July 31

Dr. Mark Y. A. Davies
Wimberly Professor of Social and Ecological Ethics
Oklahoma City University



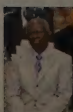
Sunday, July 10

Jessica Chicka
University Chaplain for International Students
Boston University



Sunday, August 7

Rev. Dr. Robert Allan Hill
Dean of Marsh Chapel, Professor of New Testament and Pastoral Theology, Boston University



Sunday, July 17 and 24

Lawrence Edward Carter Sr. 33°, Ph.D., D.D., D.H., D.R.S., D.H.C.
Dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel
Morehouse College



Sunday, August 14

Rev. Susan S. Shafer
Senior Minister (Retired)
Asbury First United Methodist Church



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Good Samaritan, by Jacopo Bassano (1510–1592)

The parable of the good Samaritan, here depicted by the Italian mannerist painter Jacopo Bassano, illustrates generosity and one person's support for another, devoid of prejudice. In the context of Catholic Venice in the 16th century, Bassano's work takes the church to task for failing in its obligations to care for the sick and needy.

Art selection and commentary by Heidi J. Hornik, who teaches in the art department at Baylor University, and Mikeal C. Parsons, who teaches in the school's religion department.



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